



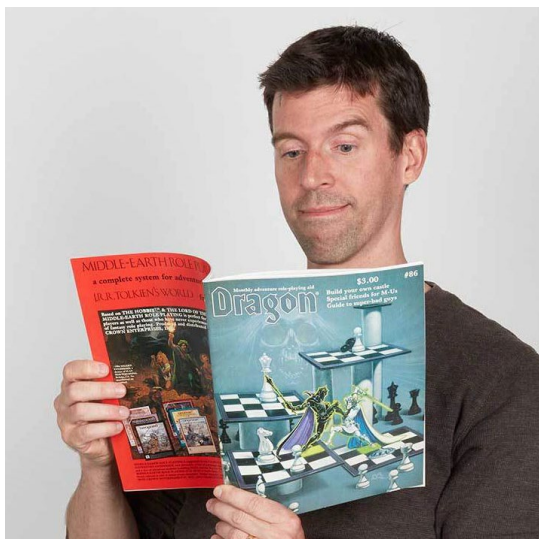
DRAGON+

MAGIC: THE GATHERING
**Exclusive Card
Previews!**

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®

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ISSUE 38



Welcome to Dragon+ Issue 38

What's a simple card game between friends? Over twenty-five years of lasting memories, for one thing. All cheating aside.



Imagining The Ampersand: Lucas Graciano

This issue's cover artist lights up a zombie dragon and exonerates a background character!



In The Works

Join us on a tour of the hot new



D&D Live 2021

The yearly D&D showcase

products coming soon, including The Wild Beyond the Witchlight and Strixhaven: A Curriculum of Chaos

includes chaotic carnivals, musical interludes, cooking standoffs, and B-movie D&D!



Streaming Highlights

This issue we showcase LGBTQ+ friendly streams, step through the Stargate to play D&D with the Tech Bandits, and listen to Dark Dice being rolled by a Hollywood A-lister!



Magic: The Gathering - Adventures in the Forgotten Realms Exclusive Card Reveals

Magic joins the party with its D&D debut as we preview Ebondeth, Black, Green, and Adult Gold Dragons!



When Magic: The Gathering Met Dungeons & Dragons

Peter Adkison and Steve Conard take a wander through the history of Magic: The Gathering and its early ties to D&D.



Magic: The Gathering - Adventures in the Forgotten Realms

James Wyatt and Jules Robins plot the creation of a Magic set that's been decades in its conception.



Magic: The Gathering - Saturday



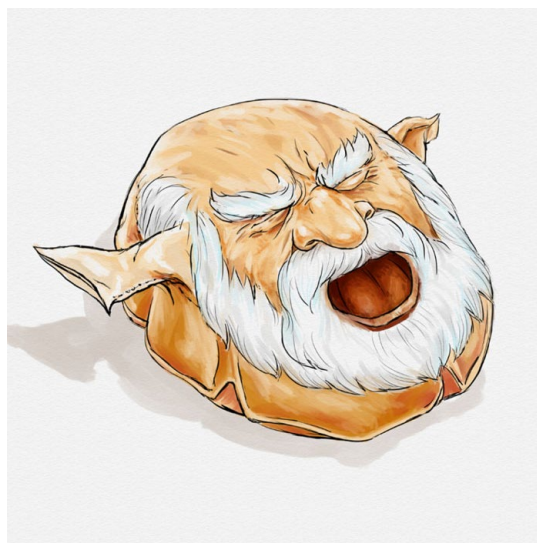
Magic: The Gathering - Using

Morning D&D Secret Lair Drop

Artist Tyler Walpole cranks the nostalgia up to 11 with a flashback to the classic '80s fantasy cartoon.

Magic Cards in D&D

If you're looking for inspiration not perspiration or you just want to add flavor to your D&D campaign, a set of Magic cards has you covered.



Character Spotlight: NPCs

Legendary Magic: The Gathering Planeswalker Dakkon Shadow Slayer joins fifth edition D&D!

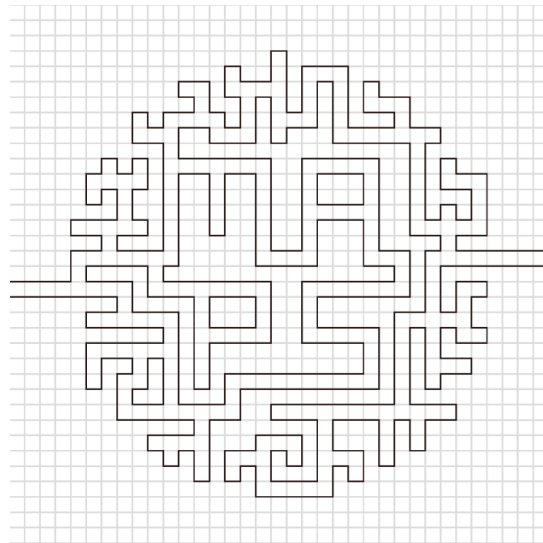
Community Poll: Ravenloft Horror Trinkets

Revealing the chilling items littering the Domains of Dread as suggested by D&D players.



Unearthed Arcana: Mages of Strixhaven

Adding five subclasses that can be shared by many different types of magic user.



Maps (and Art) of the Month

Dare to explore the mist-bound Domains of Dread? Here are images and maps to help run your first encounter in Van Richten's Guide to Ravenloft!



D&D Virtual Play Weekends - Ravenloft: Mist Hunters



The Best of the Dungeon Masters Guild

This issue we audition unusual

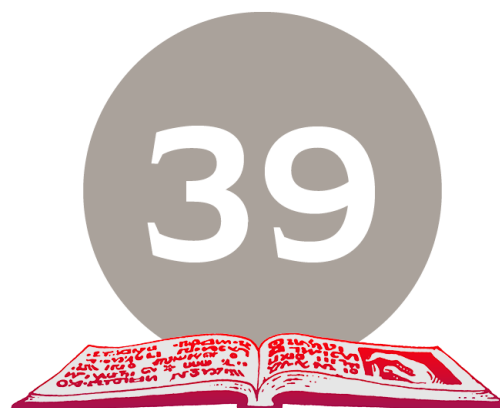
The latest D&D Adventurers League storyline takes a wander through the Domains of Dread.

(and fun!) warlock patrons and chat with Matthew Whitby about The Dungeon Master's Guild House podcast.



Shawn Wood

Our introduction to members of the D&D Team and their roles continues with the Concept Artist.



Next Issue

Look out for a major update to this issue following D&D Live 2021!



DRAGON+ 38

Welcome to Dragon+ Issue 38

What's a simple card game between friends?
Over twenty-five years of lasting memories, for
one thing. All cheating aside.

“*R*amirez...”

...I growl in my best Clancy Brown/The Kurgan voice. Only in this case, my nemesis isn't Egyptian-born Juan Sánchez-Villalobos Ramírez (played by Scottish-born Sean Connery), but rather a certain pirate whose tales are not always to be believed.

Ramirez DePietro.

It was 1994, and I was home from college for the summer. A good friend of mine, likewise home for the summer, had just introduced me to *Magic: The Gathering*. I was primarily a D&D player but willing to give this new game a try, and it didn't take long before I was utterly hooked and introducing the game to the rest of our circle.

My friend would beat me in *Magic* quite often that summer, in part because we were still learning the rules. In those years, for example, cards didn't have helpful reminder text... such as how mana spent to give +1/+1 counters to Frozen Shades only lasted until the end of turn. Those damn shades built up to unstoppable levels very quickly, otherwise.

Of course, learning games is often about getting the rules wrong at first. My “official” understanding of Dungeons & Dragons came with the 1983 “Red Box” *Dungeons & Dragons Basic Set*. Before that, we'd make up the rules using six-sided dice stolen from *Monopoly* sets and overheard conversations from older siblings around the neighborhood (I recall scandalous talk about the first edition *Monster*

Manual entry for nymphs. And much confusion about how numbered locations in printed adventures worked—at first, we assumed they were like a random encounter table; you rolled the dice to see what room you entered).

It also didn't help that my friend would occasionally plant cards he really wanted to play within reach (such as Ramirez DePietro). 'Hey, what's that lying under the table?' I thought one day... until I realized my friend planned to casually reach down for it when he had enough mana. His early version of a sideboard, I guess.

Not that I could blame him. *Magic: The Gathering's Legends* set had just released, and in addition to the powerful mechanics, a lot of cards featured absolutely compelling characters. Johan. Kasimir the Lone Wolf. Livonya Silone. Nicol Bolas! Even if you didn't win the game, getting them into play was a measure of pride (and not just because of their hefty casting costs). You wanted the glory of having them on your side.

My two great gaming passions have long been D&D and *Magic*, and so what an honor and a thrill it continues to be involved with the company producing both—and an added delight to work on this issue of *Dragon+* that further celebrates these two brands intersecting. We have a number of exclusive preview cards to share with you from *Magic's* upcoming *Adventures in the Forgotten Realms* set. Plus, the backstory of the very name “Wizards of the Coast”!

I still fondly remember playing those first games of *Magic* that summer, and the summers that followed. I also remember seeing Ramirez DePietro planted under the table... and casually sliding my foot over it, so my friend couldn't palm it.

Sorry, pal.

(But I do still owe you for introducing me to *Magic*!)

Bart Carroll

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Imagining The Ampersand: Lucas Graciano

This issue's cover artist lights up a zombie dragon and exonerates a background character!

Artist Lucas Graciano's portfolio might be bursting at the seams with *Magic: The Gathering* images but the *Adventures in the Forgotten Realms* card set isn't his first taste of Dungeons & Dragons. He remembers rolling a d20 in seventh or eighth grade ("I have very fond memories and would love to do it again.") and he followed that experience later in life by creating cover art for *Dungeon Magazine*. "That was back when Jon Schindehette was working there and I did several covers for him, so it's also been a while," he tells *Dragon+*, as we discuss the image of his zombie dragon Ebondeath sitting beneath our see-through logo.

Magic: The Gathering cards typically provide a literal small window of opportunity for artists to work with, and they use that space to full

effect to create the necessary wow factor. But Lucas was pleased to be handed a bigger canvas to play with, as the version of Ebondeath gracing our cover appears as a full-art card in the new D&D set.



Scourge of Valkas (tap to view)

“It’s a different format to compose for and it makes for a nice change of pace,” he says. “Because it’s a long-format image, I almost designed it to look like a book cover. The physical piece I created is a very tall oil painting.”

A skeletal dragon for the card Grave Betrayal was one of Lucas’s first designs for *Magic: The Gathering* a decade ago. While the artist says it was fun to revisit a similar topic, he describes Ebondeath as “a different beast.”

“Even as a full art card, this has to be instantly recognizable from far away. I always start by focusing on the big shapes as I work out the composition of the piece. I also think about what is going to work as far as dark on light shapes or light on dark shapes, which helps the detail stand out when it’s shrunk down to the small card size,” he reveals.

“I was really happy with the wider cathedral area. I knew the dragon

itself was going to be dark so it needed a light background. This sense of brightness behind Ebondeth made it stand out. That brightness then drops off quickly, with a lot of dark, moody colors as you get further away from the focus of the painting.”

One thing that stood out for *Dragon+* was the background character pictured clearly between Ebondeth’s legs, who appears to be holding a staff and tome and be part of the proceedings. Are they summoning this legendary creature?

“Actually, that’s just a statue in the background,” Lucas clarifies for *Dragon+*. “The scene takes place in this big, abandoned cathedral. I drew that statue holding a book to represent the grave of a monk or a wizard priest. It’s there to add ambience.”



Vexing Devil (tap to view)

Your artwork covers characters, creatures, and landscapes. Do you have a favorite among those you like to create?

The variety keeps things fresh. I love doing creatures, those are always fun. It took me a while to get my first *Magic* land card, but I really enjoy those too. I have a traditional artistic background from a fine art school so it’s a great opportunity to put everything I learned

into practice. But I think I get so much work because I'm versatile and they can count on me to do a lot of different things.

What's your experience of *Magic: The Gathering*?

I have a lot of friends who play *Magic* so I know the basics. One of my friends who's really into the game came over and built me a few decks out of the cards I had so that my daughter and I could play. We have fun but we're not very competitive.

Have you always been a fan of fantasy art?

I grew up reading *Heavy Metal* magazine and loved the artwork of Frank Frazetta and Boris Vallejo. It inspired me as a young guy to know that you can paint dragons and wizards and get paid.

How would you describe your art style?

I think of it as being realistic but not hyper-real. But honestly, it changes from piece to piece depending on the subject. If it's something I can gather a lot of reference for or shoot a model in costume, it tends to be realistic. But if I'm asked to design a fantastical creature of some kind, even though you've got to find ways to make it look realistic, in the end it's coming from your imagination. And the more imagination you put into it, the more stylized it becomes.



Grave Titan (tap to view)

Do you work digitally or traditionally?

Around 80 percent of my work is digital at the start, when I'm doing the preliminary sketches based on the art brief. I'll usually send over two to five sketches. Once they pick one, I'll shoot any reference I need. Following any revisions or embellishments, I'll create a more detailed drawing. Sometimes that's digital and sometimes it's with a graphite pencil. I then transfer that to the canvas to create the oil painting. All my finished work is created traditionally.

Is there any danger to creating the final image as a painting?

Isn't it easier to correct mistakes if you're working digitally?

Oils are relatively forgiving as far as the medium goes, and I've been using them for a long time. They're not as forgiving as digital, obviously, so if an art director wants a big change at the very end, that can be an issue. But I don't ever run into that problem because art directors know what to expect from me and I know what they need. Usually, if there's a change, it might be to lighten something up or darken something down. A lot of times I'll do that digitally.



Nyxborn Wolf (tap to view)

Is shooting your own reference material better than using an image search?

I do often use an image search to find reference material. I'll usually end up collaging pieces together in a sketch or using Photoshop. As part of that I might use a gesture from a photoshoot I did with my wife or my daughter, who act as my models. Whether it's something I shoot or something I find online, a lot of the time it's piecemeal.

What was your artistic training like?

I went to a privately owned trade school in Southern California. I was a student there for about four years and then I was asked to teach, so I've been teaching there for about 20 years.

Does teaching art require different skills to creating art?

I fell into it fairly naturally. I knew enough and had enough skill that people could learn from me. Studying there for four years and picking up the skills I did, teaching was a great way to continue my education and to give back to the school in some part. This was actually my final term as I've decided to step away to focus on my illustration career. The school was like family and we were a tight-

knit group so I'll miss it dearly. It's a bittersweet moment but it's been a long time coming.

You can see more of Lucas Graciano's work on [his official website](#), and connect with him on [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#).

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PREVIEWS

IN THE WORKS



THE WILD BEYOND THE WITCHLIGHT

by Matt Chapman



(Select to view)

Something wicked this way comes! *The Wild Beyond the Witchlight*, the next hardcover adventure for fifth edition Dungeons & Dragons, releases September 21, 2021. And according to Principal Game Architect Chris Perkins, who revealed more details about this Feywild adventure at *D&D Live 2021*, it's been over a decade in the making!

"I very much wanted to write a full-length adventure that shines a

spotlight on the Feywild for fourth edition, because we'd never done one before. But when we started working on fifth edition, our priorities shifted. I was finally able to circle back around to focus on this project again once we were deep enough into fifth edition. So this idea has been percolating in my brain for around 11 years," Chris tells *Dragon+*.



Chris kept notebooks of his Feywild ideas during that time, in anticipation of being able to return to the project. These included the makeshift plot he'd written, maps he'd drawn, and lists of unusual items that could be found in that setting. When he re-pitched the idea of a Feywild story in 2017, Larian had started working on *Baldur's Gate III*, and the D&D Team pushed ahead with *Baldur's Gate: Descent into Avernus* to tie into that product. It was another two years before Chris finally got to reopen those notebooks.

"When I went back to my notes there were page after page of ideas for this setting. Here's a bunch of plants and mushrooms native to the Feywild, here's a list of fey trinkets. I kept adding to those lists and I started to flesh out the plot with some new ideas about how this could be a story about the passage of time," he remembers.



ADVENTURE HOOKS

The Wild Beyond the Witchlight draws players into its adventure in two ways. A more traditional story hook (which Chris calls "the warlock's quest") is available, with characters helping someone in return for a reward. But the "lost things" story hook uses the idea that when their characters visited the Witchlight Carnival as children, something was taken from them. When that traveling show returns, they see this as their chance to get that lost item back.

What they lost might be something immaterial like their artistic creativity, or it could be something tangible like a beloved toy. They can either roll randomly to determine what they lost at the carnival or choose it during character creation.



(Select to view)

“In 2017 I was chatting with Patrick Rothfuss and when it became clear that he was keen on fey-themed stories I asked if he’d be interested in helping me flesh out this Feywild concept. The Witchlight Carnival came out of those discussions, because the Feywild is a wacky place and creatures don’t behave the way that they behave in the Material Plane. We realized that before the characters get to the Feywild, it would be helpful if they understood its rules. A fey-themed carnival that serves as a gateway would be the perfect place to school them. The party could explore the carnival as their first step and learn some of the Feywild’s basic concepts before they travel there. The quirky characters they meet there will reflect in many ways the unusual characters that they’ll meet in the Feywild.”

Time is another important factor in *The Wild Beyond the Witchlight* and the three hags of the Hourglass Coven at the heart of the story are tied to the concept of past, present, and future. Their kingdoms of Hither, Thither, and Yon also reflect the three sisters’ different manifestations of time. Each of the hags exerts power over their realm—and when they’re displeased, their realm is displeased and things can go awry.

- Eldest sister Skabatha, also known as Granny Nightshade, is a

recluse who lives mostly in the past. Her dwelling is in an ancient forest. She passes the time by making toys for children and is part toy herself. Woe betides adventurers if the wind-up key sticking out of her back runs down.

- Bavlorna Blightstraw, also known as Slack-jawed Lorna, is a toad-like hag who embodies the present. She can create miniature manifestations of herself, which run around her and perform odd tasks. She exists in the here and now and doesn't dwell on the past or pay much mind to the future. She lives in the swamp settlement of Downfall, among a court of bullywugs.
- The third hag is Endelyn Moongrave, also known as Bitter End ("I adore her art," Chris says, "and hers is a fascinating story"). Endelyn is a prognosticator who can see the future. She lives in a mountaintop theater, where she has plays performed for her amusement. But she also wears a dress that can double as a theater contraption so she can perform plays telling the future of those she meets.



©Wizards.

(Select to view)

INCREDIBLE ART & CHARACTERS

Ellywick Tumblestrum (played by *Girls, Guts, Glory*'s Erika Fermina), bard of the multiverse, and guest of the Summer Queen, showed off two versions of the book's artwork featuring some of those individuals as she introduced an adventure storyline she'll be part of.



Yet there are many more characters still to be introduced, with some sure to be fan-favorites before the Feywild adventure is complete. They will often provide much-needed support for the party and continue an education about the fey that began in the Witchlight Carnival.

“One of the key things about this adventure is that the characters can—if they’re clever and paying attention—complete the entire storyline without ever engaging in combat. And in order to pull that off, of course, we have to seed the adventure with a bunch of characters like Sir Talavar and Jingle Jangle,” Chris explains.

“Sir Talavar, a favorite of mine, is a knightly and gallant faerie dragon, while Jingle Jangle is a goblin key collector who wears a coat of keys. What I like about Jingle Jangle is she’s very representative of goblins in the Feywild in that they’re complex creatures. She’s also kind and helpful. In the course of the story, she reminds the characters that the Feywild is worth saving.”



(Select to view)

Folklore and other classic tales about the fey also often include children. That might be tales of fey abduction or of younger children being lured into wondrous fey realms and disappearing from their homes. Chris says childlike innocence plays well in the Feywild.

“In *Waterdeep: Dragon Heist*, the urchins served to show that people of all ages lived in the city and there’s a reason to defend it. Similarly, children show up in *The Wild Beyond the Witchlight* because fey stories and children go hand in hand. The Getaway Gang is a small band of children brought to the Feywild who live in a treehouse built into the boughs of a treant. They’re fun because they’re resourceful and they can be immensely helpful to a party, as they have some unconventional solutions that adults might not think of,” he says.

“Star, who was an attraction at the Witchlight Carnival and accidentally found its way into the Feywild and is now lost there, lives with this group of runaway children. This displacer beast kitten has the potential to win over a lot of new D&D fans, because she’s just so darn adorable and makes such a cute companion.”

A storyline that uses time as a key component also cleverly draws upon the rich history of Dungeons & Dragons. Chris says even if people don’t always recognize these little nuggets from the past,

they've become part of our shared language.



(Select to view)

“D&D is over 45 years old and it’s become a multi-generational game. We’ve included tons of D&D Easter eggs that nod to the theme of time echoing throughout the story’s past and Thaco the clown is one of them,” he says, noting that he’s also been able to pull in creatures from ancient D&D lore.

“The jabberwock appeared in a second edition *Monster Compendium*,

and that's what we went back to when revising it for fifth edition. The only official D&D adventure the creature ever appeared in was called *The Manxome Foe*, when I was asked to create an adventure tied to *Planescape*. It's another instance of us reaching into the past and pulling something forward to reinforce that theme of time."



Characters and monsters aren't the only element of *The Wild Beyond the Witchlight* that benefit from incredible art. The standard book cover art was created by **Tyler Jacobson**, while the soft-touch, variant cover—available exclusively in game stores—features work by former *Dragon+* cover artist **Hydro74**. Plus, a poster map (created by Will Doyle and Stacy Allen, which Chris describes as “stunningly gorgeous”) is included with the book, featuring a map of the Witchlight Carnival on one side, and a map of the Feywild domain of Prismeer on the other. Expect to find a few hidden delights within both of those images, including a character on the Prismeer side that friends and followers of Chris might recognize.

“We’re also planning to create something similar to *The Turtle Package*, which we released on the DMs Guild to coincide with *Tomb of Annihilation*,” Chris reports. “This will be inspirational material that’s completely standalone and will explain how to create your own archfey and their Feywild domains. Once you’ve had a taste of what we’ve created in *The Wild Beyond the Witchlight*, you can go off and create your own.”

The Wild Beyond the Witchlight releases September 21, 2021 and is available for pre-order now at your **local game store**, bookstores such as **Barnes & Noble**, and **Books-a-Million**, or online at retailers such as **Amazon**. A digital version is also available at **D&D Beyond**, and **Roll20**.

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IN THE WORKS



BEADLE & GRIMM'S THE WILD BEYOND THE WITCHLIGHT: PLATINUM & SILVER EDITIONS

by Matt Chapman



Premium gaming company Beadle & Grimm's has been putting the pandemonium back into warehouses since 2018. From its first Platinum Edition release for *Waterdeep: Dragon Heist*, through *Sinister Silver*, *Gold*, and *Legendary* Editions, its boxes are all about adding an extra level to your gaming. And as the company learns from each release, its boxes continue to evolve, with D&D's latest campaign storyline *The Wild Beyond the Witchlight* getting not one but two versions to choose

from.

"When we first started the company, it was always our plan to have tiered releases so we could appeal to as wide an audience as possible. And we're finally there," says Paul Shapiro, co-founder of Beadle & Grimm's.

“When we released *Baldur’s Gate: Descent into Avernus*, the Platinum box came out in November and the Silver box was released six months later. For the first time, we’re releasing the Platinum and the Silver Editions at the exact same time. Customers can now decide from the start if they want to spend \$500 and get the limited-edition experience, which is going to have some pretty cool stuff inside, or get the unlimited Silver Edition that doesn’t include all the unique physical artifacts.”

Beadle & Grimm’s prides itself on taking Dungeons & Dragons settings and bringing a little extra flavor to them, and that continues here. If you loved the company’s plushie version of Lulu from the *Platinum Edition* of *Baldur’s Gate: Descent into Avernus* as much as we did, prepare to be excited! Soon to be fan-favorite character Sir Talavar is getting his very own plushie in *The Wild Beyond the Witchlight Platinum Edition*. Where Lulu was designed to act as a constant reminder that the hollyphant was travelling with your party as an NPC (“and you can hug it as you die—in Hell!” Matt Lillard screams in his punk unboxing of that adventure), this mustachioed faerie dragon plushie has its own parts to play.



“Matt Lillard’s role, among other things, is to come up with ideas that everyone else thinks are ridiculous and can never work. And then he browbeats us until we finally give in. More often than not, they end up being great ideas. It was his idea to create both the Lulu plushie and the finger puppets for *Curse of Strahd*,” Paul tells *Dragon+*.

“For Witchlight, we found an opportunity to add a plushie that is not just super cute, it also has multiple fun gameplay opportunities. As well as bringing Sir Talavar the faerie dragon to your tabletop when the character appears in the game, the plushie can also be used as one of the stuffed animal prizes in the carnival. And with the central theme of the characters having lost something at the Witchlight Carnival as a child, this plushie could also be one of the things that a player ends up wanting to recover from the hags.”



More easily discussed are the incredible maps Chris Perkins described on the previous page. Beadle & Grimm’s production goblins were so impressed by Will Doyle and Stacy Allen’s work that they’ve chosen to use them in their own sets. Of course, this being a Platinum Edition, they’ll be printing these depictions of the Witchlight Carnival and the fey world of Prismeer a whopping two

to three feet wide. Meanwhile, the DM screen that’s included in the boxes features newly created, unique art that combines the carnival and the fey worlds together in a single scene.

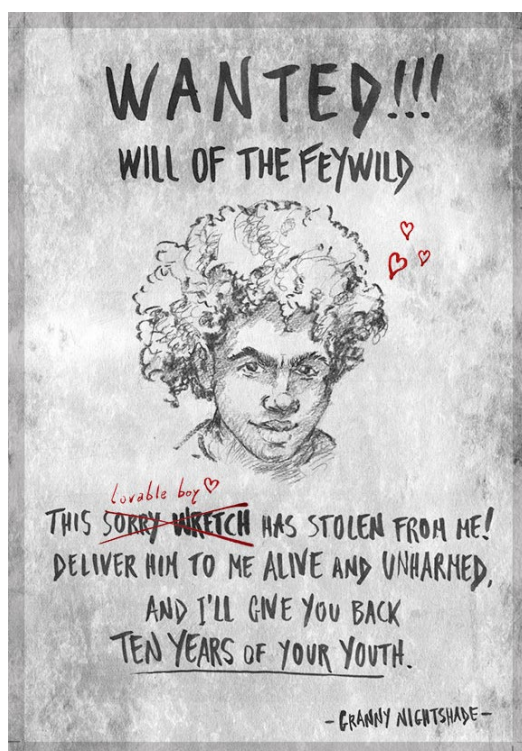


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As usual, there are a plenty of handouts, papers, and other physical items designed to bring the campaign to life. Being set in the Feywild, that includes lots of strange and unusual items to have fun with. Paul says it's great when the team has to ask itself, what does a bullywug's letter look like?

“One of those pieces is the ticket to the Witchlight Carnival and we’ve put a stack of five of them in the box so the DM can hand them out to the players. There’s a picture of the ticket in the book, so we had an artist create a bigger version for us,” he reveals. “And every time a character goes on a ride, the DM can punch the ticket. We’re printing them on really thick paper, and we think they’re going to be something the players are going to want to hold onto afterwards.”

One new challenge posed by *The Wild Beyond the Witchlight* is in the way its adventure can be played without ever rolling initiative. Traditionally, Beadle & Grimm’s has prided itself on its tactical battle maps (see its impressive charts showing every



inch of Strahd's castle, for example), while the encounter cards that are included in the box are another favorite item of DMs and players alike. If players decide to navigate the Feywild without any hacking and slashing, would they even need a map or encounter cards?

"*The Wild Beyond the Witchlight* is built around the idea that you don't have to use combat to achieve your goals. It forced us to take a step back and think about what should go into a box like this," Paul explains.

"But there are some amazing locations in this world that are crying out to be brought to life by a great cartographer, even if it's for a roleplaying encounter. We also realized that battles probably will still take place, even if they're handled slightly differently.



“And the original idea for our encounter cards is that when you meet a character or a monster, whether it’s to fight or not, the players have the picture in front of them and the DM has the stats on the back. Those stats will still be there in case the party decides to draw swords, but Wizards of the Coast now includes more roleplaying information for encounters such as this, so we made sure the DM has those key attributes from both a roleplaying and a combat point of view.”

Paul says the overriding principle for Beadle & Grimm’s is to aid the DM and help make their game flow more smoothly, while adding richer material to bring the immersion level up a notch.

“We’re still five friends sitting around a virtual table, spitballing ideas and saying, ‘Wouldn’t it be cool if we did this!’ And for every ten of those ideas, one or two of them are actually practical,” he says.

***The Wild Beyond the Witchlight* releases as **Platinum** and **Silver** Editions in September 2021 and is available for pre-order now at the **Beadle & Grimm’s website**.**

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IN THE WORKS



STRIXHAVEN: A CURRICULUM OF CHAOS

It won't just be hollyphants packing their trunks and heading off on a journey of discovery this year. The next *Magic: The Gathering* setting to join fifth edition D&D is the arcane center of learning known as **Strixhaven**.

Project Lead Amanda Hamon sat down for an exclusive chat with *Dragon+* ahead of *D&D Live 2021* to catch us up on all the campus gossip. She explains where Strixhaven exists, how acing an exam can boost your skills, and why an iron-lifting dwarf with a gap in her teeth is your new best friend—if you're lucky!



©Wizards.

(Select to view)

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

“Because this school of mages has been drawn from the *Magic: The Gathering* multiverse, one of the most important questions we had to answer is: Where is Strixhaven? Since it’s a standalone setting, and almost all its adventures take place on campus, we wanted it to be easy to drop into any campaign. We were very careful to avoid any indications that Strixhaven exists in the Forgotten Realms, or any other established D&D setting. Dungeon Masters can decide where it

fits into their world.”

STRIXHAVEN: SOURCEBOOK OR ADVENTURE?

“It’s both a sourcebook *and* an adventure, similar to *Mythic Odysseys of Theros* and *Guildmasters’ Guide to Ravnica*, with the key difference that we included more adventure content in this book. It includes four chapters of adventure content—nearly two-thirds of the book—and these adventures are set nearly exclusively on the campuses of Strixhaven. This book also includes a gazetteer chapter detailing the way the university functions, as well as information on the five different colleges and their important players. There’s a chapter of new rules to help you make your player characters students who are tied to each of these schools of magic. Finally, there’s a bestiary full of creatures that you’ll encounter on and around campus, as well as several stat blocks for professors from the colleges and even your fellow students,” Amanda reveals.

Each of these colleges bears the name of the elder dragon who founded it, with every college striving to match its founder’s vision and magical aptitudes.

- Lorehold College

Motto: Leave no stone unturned.

For some students, the past is a rich tapestry worthy of disciplined study. Others wear that tapestry like a cape as they jump down into a forgotten tomb. Loreholds are diligent researchers and daring adventurers. These passionate scholars are obsessed with history and understanding the whims of time itself, exploring the past by poring over archaeological artifacts and conversing with ancient spirits.

- Prismari College

Motto: Express yourself with the elements.

All the world’s a stage, and whether their art is informed by mind or emotion, Prismari always leave a lasting impression. Dedicated to the visual and performing arts and using magic to express themselves, Prismari spells can be spectacles of raw elemental creativity or meticulous artistic endeavors.

- Quandrix College

Motto: Math is magic.

Quandrix mages are ingenious math magicians. They’ll solve a puzzle cube while contemplating the metaphysical properties of the

universe. They dedicate their lives to the study and manipulation of nature's core mathematic principles, using patterns, fractals, and symmetries to command power over the fundamental forces of nature.

- Silverquill College

Motto: Sharp style. Sharper wit.

Stylish, intimidating, and tirelessly competitive, Silverquill mages are born leaders with a razor-sharp wit and natural charisma that can be used for good or for ill. Silverquills wield the magic of words, using encouraging speeches and inspiring battle poetry to lift allies, while deriding foes with arcane insults and piercing banter.

- Witherbloom College

Motto: Get your hands dirty.

Witherbloom mages are most at home riding zombie crocs, picking herbs for potions, and hanging out in their swamp making grim jokes. They draw power from the essence of living beings, harnessing the devastating energies of the alchemy of life and death—whether that means enhancing nature or exploiting it.

“The types of magic practiced within those colleges are specific so it'll be recognizable as to what college a student is from. But there won't be personality traits tied to specific colleges—if you're a student at Prismari, you won't need to be brash and spur of the moment. We want players to be able to develop their own personalities for their D&D characters,” Amanda says.

“There are also pretty strict rules on what is and isn't allowed at Strixhaven. For example, Witherbloom College might be associated with plant growth/druidic themes and have some necromancy thrown in, but no magic that's considered inherently evil is taught at Strixhaven. That informs the adventure because the main villain might be someone who was expelled many years ago for doing something they were not supposed to do.”

MAGIC ITEMS

“We've included a few new magic items in the book. These are specific to Strixhaven and appear in the adventures organically. In most cases, they are items that the characters can earn or that the employees give them as a reward for completing a task.”



(Select to view)

MAGICAL ADVENTURES

“The four adventures within *Strixhaven: A Curriculum of Chaos* are structured in an innovative way. Each individual chapter is a standalone adventure based around a year of college life. You can create a character who’s a first-year student and play through the entire campaign, with the four adventures all linked together, or you can make a second-year or third-year student, for example, and play through the adventure for that particular year.

“We also make sure the adventures provide a breadth of experiences. Of course, we lean into the young adult tropes associated with being at school—there’s a *Pitch Perfect*-style sing-off at one point—but it’s always with a D&D twist.

“And there’s lots of traditional D&D content as well. You’re still fighting monsters, overcoming obstacles, and solving mysteries, but in a different environment. For example, one campus adventure is essentially a dungeon crawl that’s been mapped to this world. It’ll hopefully make for a fun change for both players and DMs.

“Each year is structured into academic terms, including encounters that give you the feel of being a student on campus and exams to test your knowledge in a specific subject. For those who want to lean into this aspect of student life, we provide rules that allow you to study for and take exams with your fellow adventurers. If you do well on an exam, you’ll gain extra exam dice to add to your rolls during the adventure.

“It’s a simple rules system. Has passing your exam given you a boost? Then roll a d6 and add that to the skill check you’re making. It’s a nice little reward that adds flavor if you decide to bring that element into the game,” Amanda says.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

“To further help players lean into campus life, we also provide rules for taking part in extracurriculars. It’s very different to anything we’ve done before, which is really exciting, and it’s flavored to bring the university experience into Dungeons & Dragons.

“The extracurriculars rules allow a character to join up to two clubs, or hold down a job and be a member of one club. You might be a member of a Mage Tower team, which is one of the main campus sports. There’s also a cheer squad for Mage Tower that you can join. Other clubs include an Iron-Lifter Society for the gym rats, a Showband Association for the band kids, and the Play Actors’ Guild for the drama kids.”



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BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

“Our new relationship subsystem provides backstories and personalities for eighteen of your fellow students and helps make the adventures very player focused. Depending on how robustly they want to use the system, DMs can run an introductory session zero to introduce these NPCs to the player characters. Or they can allow them to be introduced organically as part of the adventures. The adventures heavily incorporate these NPCs, down to players

encountering certain individuals who are part of the same club or who work at the same job based on their personalities.

“Players can access an NPC’s student profile to discover which college and year they’re in, their species, gender, and pronouns, as well as learning more about who they are as a person. They can then interact with these NPCs in specific social encounters, which usually happen as part of a group event.

“What the players need to decide is how they want to participate? Do they only want to observe? Is there someone they’re interested in watching this event with and so how would they like to interact with them? Will this be more of a positive interaction or form part of a rivalry with this person? The options they choose build points and once those points hit a threshold, they either become friends and the NPC provides a mechanical benefit or they’re now rivals who will mess with them.

“Another part of the relationship subsystem allows for deeper connections. One or more characters can be your ‘beloved,’ which might be your best friend, a sibling, or a romantic relationship. Those deeper connections also provide a special benefit, too. There are even optional rules in this system for a rival eventually becoming your beloved, which we hope provides a lot of fun and nuance to these rules.

“When we ask for playtest feedback on D&D adventures, the responses often include statements such as, ‘This monster needs to be harder to defeat’ or ‘We didn’t know how to access that area.’ The feedback on *Strixhaven* was that everybody loved Greta Gorunn, the super friendly, iron-lifting dwarf with a gap in her teeth. And everybody in the party fought over getting her to like them the most. When that’s happening, our job is done.”

***Strixhaven: A Curriculum of Chaos* releases December 7, 2021 and is available for pre-order now at your **local game store**, bookstores such as **Barnes & Noble**, and **Books-a-Million**, or online at retailers such as Amazon. A digital version is also available at **D&D Beyond**, and **Roll20**.**

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IN THE WORKS



FIZBAN'S TREASURY OF DRAGONS



(Select to view)

You might think that the standard collective noun for dragons is either a flight of dragons, a weyr of dragons, a school of dragons, or a wing of dragons. Well, Fizban the Fabulous has so much valuable information to share with you about these unique creatures that “treasury” of dragons is the only description that properly captures it. Because once you begin to measure the impact dragons have on D&D, you realize they touch every facet of the game.

“*Fizban’s Treasury of Dragons* is comparable to *Volo’s Guide to Monsters* or *Mordenkainen’s Tome of Foes*, as it brings together a

combination of lore and monster material,” Project Lead James Wyatt tells *Dragon+*. “This source book contains the revised dragonborn races, feats, and spells that we previewed in *Unearthed Arcana*, as well as magic items, a deeper dive into the *Monster Manual* dragons, dragon adjacent monsters, lair maps, and various tables to help you generate adventure ideas.”



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This major update of everything draconic also introduces the idea that dragons are creatures of the multiverse. James reveals that every

dragon on every world in the material plane has echoes on other worlds. When one of these creatures learns to develop their dragon sight and make contact with those echoes, it can unite them from across different worlds and absorb their power. At that point the dragon becomes a mythic creature and one of the greatwyrms.



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“We want to inspire DMs to think about the action of a campaign as transcending a single world of the material plane. For example, when a dragon becomes a dracolich it has repercussions on all the echoes of that dragon,” he says.

“Dragons such as Chronopsis or Aasterinian—who were identified as dragon gods in past editions of the game—are greatwyrms who have transcended the limitations of a single world in the material plane and united their energies across multiple worlds to become

more godlike.”

James was kind enough to take us through *Fizban’s Treasury of Dragons*, chapter by chapter, showing the phenomenal influence these creatures have on *Dungeons & Dragons*.



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Chapter One

“Following the introduction, Chapter One contains character options and is where you’ll find the **revised dragonborn races**, as well as the **Way of the Ascendent Dragon monk and the Drakewarden ranger subclasses** from previous *Unearthed Arcana* releases.

“Some of the feedback on the dragon subclasses said, ‘I want a dragon-flavored blank’ where blank is just about any other class in the *Player’s Handbook*. There’s a limit to the amount we can provide so we’ve included a table to spur players’ imaginations and help give any character they’re playing some dragon flavor.

“If you want a dragon-themed warlock, for example, you could play an archfey warlock whose patron is a moonstone dragon, a new kind of dragon that’s tied to the Feywild. If you want a dragon cleric, you can take any domain and worship Bahamut or Tiamat to add that dragon flavor. Maybe you’re from Eberron and have a dragonmark. Or you might decide that you gained your powers when you found a dragon claw that you now use as your spellcasting focus.”

Chapter Two

“The second chapter contains a handful of new spells, most of which we previewed in *Unearthed Arcana*. It also contains new magic items

that have ties to dragons.

“If DMs and players really embrace this book then they’re going to be seeing a lot of dragons in their campaigns. One new concept we introduce here is hoard items. These are magic items that become more powerful when they’re steeped in a dragon’s hoard.

“If you find an item in a blue wyrmling’s hoard, for example, and then several levels later you use that item to kill an adult red dragon and you steep it in that hoard, it may become more powerful because it’s the hoard of an adult dragon. The item might also change its characteristics slightly, because it’s been affected by a red dragon’s magic instead of a blue dragon.”

Chapter Three

“This chapter is aimed at the Dungeon Master and is all about building dragons as unique characters—both in terms of personality and mechanical tweaks. We also look at how you can build encounters, adventures, and entire campaigns around dragons. This includes a whole bunch of tables that are a great way to quickly share a lot of really dense story ideas. We hope that these tiny nuggets spark inspiration in a DM’s brain.

“This is primarily a mainstream D&D book but we do give a very brief nod in the direction of Tarkir, which is *Magic: The Gathering’s* dragon world, as well as *Dragonlance*. We also reference the second edition *Council of Wyrms* setting, which was another world that was built around dragons.

“The *Council of Wyrms* was a string of isles that were ruled by a bunch of different dragon clans. Their council gave the setting its name and in *Fizban’s Treasury of Dragons* we discuss different ways you might build a setting like that with dragons as major players.”

Chapter Four

“In this chapter we focus on lairs and hoards. This book embraces the D&D multiverse and talks about dragons as the quintessential creatures of the material plane. Bahamut and Tiamat created the material plane, so dragon essence is fundamentally tied to it. That explains why when a dragon creates its lair, it becomes a sort of

magical nexus as the dragon's essence seeps into the surrounding area and regional effects are created.

“We include some new regional effects, a couple of new lair actions that are tied to specific lair maps we include in the next chapter, as well as tables to help generate cool and interesting hoards. You'll find a few other brand-new lair options later in the book, such as when we're discussing amethyst dragons in Chapter Five and as part of certain monster entries in Chapter Six.”

Chapter Five

“Chapter Five makes up a third of the book and takes an in-depth look at each kind of dragon. By highlighting a dragon's personality traits, ideals, and other creatures that might associate with them, we help you build a storyline around them.

“One of the guiding principles of this book is show don't tell. We could simply tell you about the personality of brass dragons, but if we give you a bunch of tables that show you their personality traits and put words into that brass dragon's mouth, that's more effective. That might include objects that the brass dragon has a relationship with—maybe it has conversations with a bust of a philosopher that it calls Leonard!

“We also look at alignment. For example, chromatic dragons are typically evil, so can there ever be a good black dragon? The beauty of the word ‘typically’ is that there's always the possibility. Each entry in this chapter starts with a table of personality traits and a table of ideals. And the final entry on the table of ideals is always something that's dramatically outside the norm for that dragon's alignment as we wanted to make the point that typically does mean typically, not always.”

Chapter Six

“This is the bestiary chapter, which makes up almost a third of the book. A revised version of the sapphire dragon is listed here, alongside the rest of the gem dragon family: amethyst, crystal, emerald, and topaz. It also includes stats for deep dragons, and moonstone dragons, as well as dragonborn champions, humanoid dragon servitors, and various other dragon-adjacent creatures. We

also include stats for aspects of Bahamut and Tiamat.

“I have a fondness for dragon turtles and we’ve included additional age categories for those creatures. The dragon turtle in the *Monster Manual* breaks the pattern for size categories because it’s one size larger than an adult dragon. We’ve decided that’s an adult dragon turtle and have created some younger version scaled down from that. But the ancient dragon turtle is a *monster*.

“We’ve also included chromatic, metallic, and gem versions of what we call greatwyrms dragons. These creatures use the mythic monster rules from *Mythic Odysseys of Theros* to create epic battles. And the ancient dragon turtle is also in that category.”

Fizban's Treasury of Dragons releases October 26, 2021 and is available for pre-order now at your [local game store](#), bookstores such as [Barnes & Noble](#), and [Books-a-Million](#), or online at retailers such as [Amazon](#). A digital version is also available at [D&D Beyond](#), and [Roll20](#).

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For Fans By Fans Plushie Beholder

Any seasoned party member knows to beware beholders! “One glance is enough to assess its foul and otherworldly nature,” warns the *Monster Manual*. “Aggressive, hateful, and greedy, these aberrations dismiss all other creatures as lesser beings, toying with them or destroying them as they choose.”

Enter brave adventurer **Shana Targosz**, a professional costume designer for stage and screen. Having crossed paths with Scott Kurtz (of *PVP Online* and *Table Titans* fame) when he needed a costume for a live D&D event, the pair began collaborating. After designing dice bags based on characters from Scott’s online comics, they soon hit upon the idea of making D&D-style characters in that same distinct style.



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“Once we discussed which creatures would be the most fun to see in this cartoon style, we landed on the beholder,” Shana recalls of her design for the dice bag. “Who wouldn’t want a cute, terrifying monster protecting their precious dice?”

Once she’d chosen a ‘look’ for the face, head, and body shape of this new plushie version of the beholder, Shana sketched it in different poses until she found one that was just right. With that design nailed down, she got to work selecting fabrics for color and texture, so she could begin patterning. Shana describes the process of creating a pattern for a creature with unusual anatomy as like building a flat sculpture. It’s only when the multiple pieces are assembled that it finally takes shape.

“It’s both a fun and difficult process, because if you are off in your measurements by even a quarter of an inch, the shape can drastically change. Next is the mock-up, where I create a plain cotton version so I can mark it up with notes and adjustments. Once those notes are applied, I get to work creating the plushie out of the final fabrics. I then send the prototype to the manufacturer for replication. The whole process can take months, so when the plushies arrive it is always exciting to see the siblings of the original design.”

In her quest to take the beholder from evil to adorable, Shana used soft, plush fabrics (of course!), rounded out its shape, and gave this fearsome aberration a cartoony main eye and a pink, dog-like tongue. But her favorite part of this comfy companion is its eyestalks.

“I love that the eyeballs at the end of the stalks are so round—they’re rounder than on the dice bag,” she tells *Dragon+*, “They can be used to hang the beholder up so it appears as if it’s hovering, like a super-cute but super-threatening monster to fight or cuddle!”

Beauty may be in the eye of this Plushie Beholder but we couldn’t help wondering which other D&D creatures might inspire Shana to create a companion for this snuggle buddy?

“I’d love to make a displacer beast plushie,” Shana muses, adding, “or an owlbear. Or a dragon! Really, the possibilities are endless.”

The Beholder Plushie goes on sale later this year on the [For Fans By Fans website](#).



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WIZKIDS: THE WILD BEYOND THE WITCHLIGHT FIGURES & SETS

Every Dungeons & Dragons adventure introduces colorful characters. Whether you're befriendng Slobberchops and Lulu in *Baldur's Gate: Descent Into Avernus*, looking for a potential ally in Gadof Blinsky in *Curse of Strahd* or drafting street urchins Nat, Squiddly, and Jenks into your adventures in *Waterdeep: Dragon Heist*, you're in good company.



(Select to view)

With a carnival chock full of characterful employees acting as the gateway to the faerie-filled Feywild beyond, expect to meet an equally rich cast in *The Wild Beyond the Witchlight*. And the artificers at WizKids have the joy of bringing them to further life. Patrick O'Hagan, Head of RPGs at WizKids, says the task of pulling the vivid character art from the page and bringing it to the table begins with a deep understanding of the adventure itself. The WizKids team focuses on the movement and action seen in the art assets as they develop the characters, but also consider the notes on

their personality, how they act, and any other interesting facts about them.

“Our goal is to take the adventure and prominently feature the iconic elements the players will interact with, whether that’s through diplomacy, combat, or other forms of engagement. We also examine the key moments from the story and decide which of those fun, cool aspects we should highlight,” Patrick tells *Dragon+*.



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“In the case of *The Wild Beyond the Witchlight*, there was an overwhelming feeling of how incredibly epic the adventure is going to be. There were so many amazing, thrilling things to consider, we had a hard time deciding what we wanted to incorporate into our set—so we went a little overboard!”

To namecheck just a handful of the unusual characters who've been immortalized for the tabletop, we can confirm that displacer beast kitten Star appears in the set ("That was non-negotiable"), Northwind the treant's friend Red the squirrel will be visible on his figure ("We would never separate Northwind and Red!"), Jingle Jangle's keys will feature as part of their decoration ("What would Jingle Jangle be without their keys?"), and Sir Talavar the dragon knight's mustache is very prominent ("We can confirm that Sir Talavar has the *most* prominent mustache ever seen on a tiny-size creature").



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The diversity of characters inhabiting this adventure and its settings means there are plenty more where those came from. Mythical beastie the Jabberwock, for example, is one of the biggest minis in the set, standing over 200mm tall thanks to its wings. WizKids notes the “intricate details and dynamic motion” that’ll make the Jabberwock a stunning addition to your tabletop. The three hags that play a very important role in this story have also been expertly sculpted.

“All three hags were a must-have in the set,” Patrick notes. “And they all have their own unique type of ‘vehicle’ for transportation, which shows just how wondrously entertaining this adventure will be for players and DMs alike.”

Those hags will ride alongside some iconic characters plucked from the game’s storied past. Warduke and Strongheart, which longtime fans will recall from the Saturday morning D&D cartoon, are making their first appearance in fifth edition. Their figures will be sold in separate starter sets featuring Valor’s Call and League of Malevolence characters. Patrick says his team was thrilled to get to work on such fan-favorites.



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“We went back to their first iterations to ensure the characteristics that make them so beloved shine through on the final product. We hope fans will be engaged by how much they both add to the overall story,” he says.

Following in the footsteps of amazing model sets such as the *Falling Star Sailing Ship* and *The Tower*, it's exciting to hear that two premium sets are also being created for *The Wild Beyond the Witchlight* collection. **The Witchlight Carnival Premium Set** contains the characters from that travelling show, including featured performers such as Palasha the mermaid and her tank. **The Swamp Gas Balloon Premium Set**, meanwhile, will be able to hold multiple miniatures in its basket!

Feywild fans should also look out for a couple of special promotional items they can get their hands on when they order.



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“Our two exclusive promotional sets are tied to the release. One will only be available at **local game stores**, so please reach out to them for more details. The other is only available through **DnDmini.com** while supplies last,” Patrick says, before revealing another very special addition. “Also, for the first time ever, we’re releasing a **Limited-Edition Collector’s Set** containing all the minis from the set, plus a few unique goodies!”

WizKids’ *The Wild Beyond The Witchlight* figures and premium sets are released in October 2021 and are available for pre-order now on the **DnD Mini website**.



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D&D x NERDS



In a historic treaty that allies the sweet little sparks of the confectionary world with the world’s greatest roleplaying game, NERDS and Dungeons & Dragons will finally be seen together. No really, it’s the first time!

And with similar philosophies being shared by both parties, D&D x NERDS is a match made in the Seven Heavens of Mount Celestia. NERDS teach us that we’re “Better Together,” which, as an ideology to live by, is right up there with the D&D mantra of “Never split the party.”

“It’s the perfect partnership,” says Shelly Mazzanoble. “NERDS and Dungeons & Dragons share the philosophy that while it’s great on your own, we’re better together. Like a well-rounded adventuring party.”

There are six different color NERDS characters, and they already have a distinct personality. You can see the characters and learn more about them on the [Meet the NERDS section](#) of the official website. For the *Adventure Together* promotion, these NERDS characters have been transformed into different Dungeons & Dragons classes.

“We looked at their personalities and put them in different classes to have them form the ultimate adventuring party. They are adorable and they look so excited to be playing D&D,” Shelly reveals, having unveiled videos for the wizard (PURPLE) and rogue (PINK) characters at *D&D Live 2021*.



The D&D x NERDS collaboration gives candy lovers an easy entry to Dungeons & Dragons. Starting September, consumers who purchase participating products, can upload their receipt to nerdscandy.com/dnd to unlock a level 1 D&D NERD character sheet and one of six mini-adventures that teaches the basics of D&D. The next time a consumer redeems a code, it unlocks the next party member and a mini-adventure and so on. Once all party members have been unlocked, the ultimate adventure begins with the characters advancing to 3rd level and embarking on a sweet adventure perfect for the whole family. The series is designed to be a fun, collaborative storytelling adventure and an introduction to the rules of D&D, using the magic of NERDS, but experienced players will also find the whole storyline to be a real treat.

“You’re getting really good family-friendly content, that’s a great

introduction to teach you the tenets of Dungeons & Dragons,” Shelly confirms. “You get an awesome, easy-to-understand character sheet and six mini-adventures that should take about 45 minutes to play through. The seventh adventure is a little more robust and higher level and should run about 60 minutes.”

The story begins in the city of Harmony, which has been experiencing a strange case of color outages. Rumors are flying around about what might be causing the problem and the NERDS must use their unique abilities as they go on a quest and figure out what’s happening. Along the way they’ll encounter some iconic Dungeons & Dragons monsters.

Writer and *d20 Dames* Dungeon Master Kat Kruger is the author of the *Adventure Together* series. While the seven D&D x NERDS adventures include all three pillars of Dungeons & Dragons play, the emphasis is on social interaction and exploration over combat.

“This custom content is a wonderful way to introduce kids, friends, and families to D&D, because who doesn’t want to take on the role of the ORANGE Fighter and enjoy the charming and exciting stories that Kat has crafted,” Shelly says.

The *D&D x NERDS Adventure Together promotion* featuring exclusive Dungeons & Dragons content runs globally from September 1, 2021 to December 2021.

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2021 D&D PUBLICATIONS

It's going to be a bumper year for Dungeons & Dragons-themed novels, comics, and annuals, and Publishing Lead Paul Morrissey has been kind enough to take *Dragon+* through the packed schedule. Prepare yourselves for a visit to the Forgotten Realms by Mr. Meeseeks, an adorable kids' adventure set in the Dungeon Academy, and a *Baldur's Gate III* prequel starring Minsc & Boo!

JULY 2021



Comic Collection: Stranger Things and Dungeons & Dragons
This collection, written by superstars Jim Zub and Jody Houser, includes issues 1-4 of the comic-book series. Follow the crew from Hawkins, Indiana as they discover the legendary monsters and epic adventures of the Dungeons & Dragons tabletop roleplaying game for the first time. With one chapter acting as a prequel to the sci-fi TV show, we see the campaign they were playing and the things happening to them before they ever encountered the Upside Down. *Stranger Things and Dungeons &*

Dragons is available now on [Amazon](#).

AUGUST



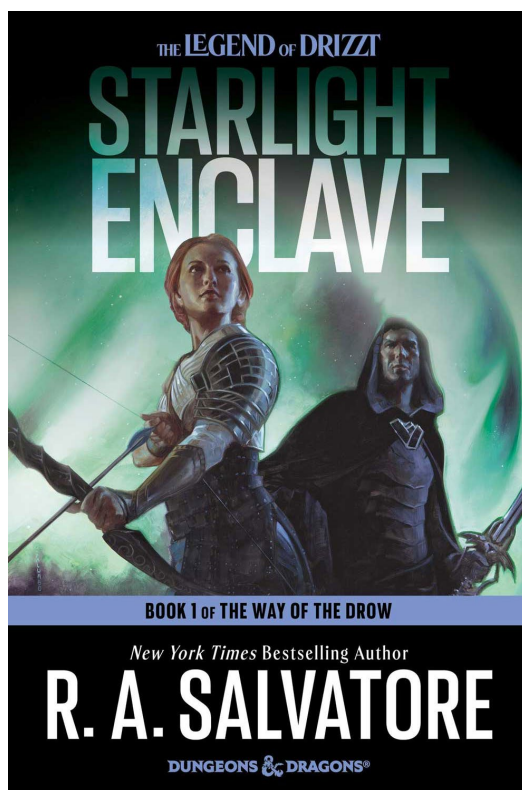
Comic Collection: At the Spine of the World

Another trade paperback coming out at the end of July sees a new party of adventurers traveling to Icewind Dale. Written by A.J. Mendez and Aimee Garcia, with illustrations by Martin Coccolo, can these five unlikely heroes stop the plot of an ancient, primordial evil? You can pre-order *At the Spine of the World* on [Amazon](#).



Comic Collection: Rick and Morty VS. Dungeons & Dragons

This deluxe-edition hardcover features all eight issues of the hilarious crossover comics. Unique for this edition is a brand-new, 30-page story featuring Mr. Meeseeks conquering the Forgotten Realms, crafted by Jim Zub and Troy Little. You can pre-order *Rick and Morty vs. Dungeons & Dragons: Deluxe Edition* on [Amazon](#).



Novel: Starlight Enclave

This is the first in a new trilogy for R.A. Salvatore's hero Drizzt. As civil war brews in Menzoberranzan, Jarlaxle and Zakefein search to unlock the secrets of a powerful sword, which could bring salvation to their home. Accompanied by Catti-Brie, the two drow discover **the Starlight Enclave**, a mysterious haven in the freezing north. With a book coming out each year, the final part of the trilogy will land on Drizzt's 35th anniversary. You can pre-order *Starlight Enclave* on [Amazon](#).

SEPTEMBER



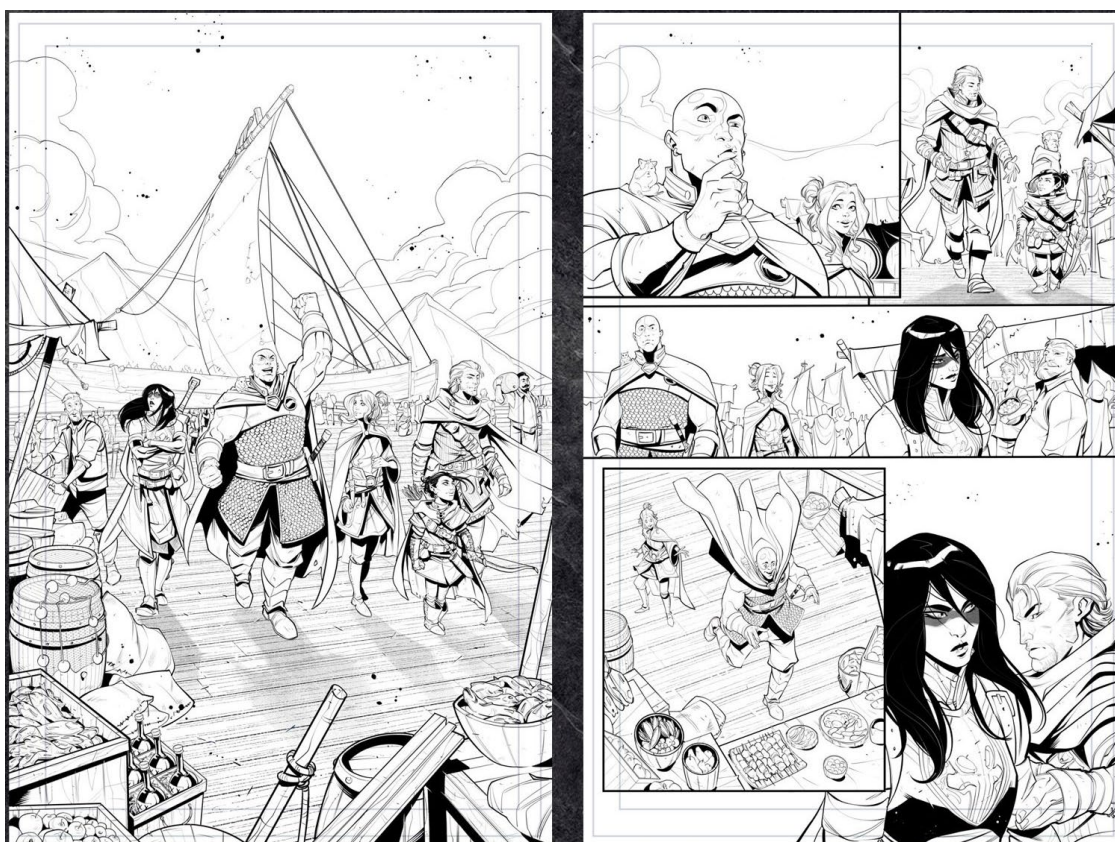
Dungeons & Dragons Annual 2022

Following the success of the *Dungeons & Dragons Annual 2021*, this new addition charts all the major developments over the past twelve months in the world of D&D. There are interviews with major livestreamers and podcasters from around the world, as well as guides to creating your own characters, and even taking the next step and becoming a Dungeon Master.

OCTOBER



Monthly Comic Series:
Mindbreaker: Baldur's Gate III
 This five-issue series features Minsc and Boo, Krydle, Shandie, Delina, and Nerys. Written by Jim Zub, it's designed to lead into the events of the *Baldur's Gate III* video game. The party must fight to save each other—and their sanity—from a mind flayer-led cult secretly destroying trust between the factions in Baldur's Gate. This storyline follows on from the *Infernal Tides* comic and takes place prior to the events in *Baldur's Gate III*.



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NOVEMBER



Novel: Dungeon Academy: No Humans Allowed!

Welcome to Dungeon Academy, where monsters and creatures train for the dark world that awaits just beyond the dungeon walls! But Zellidora “Zelli” Stormclash is different. She’s the one thing monsters and creatures of the Forgotten Realms fear the most: Zelli is a human! Disguised as a minotaur, she befriends a group of misfit monsters including a vegan owlbear, a cowardly kobold, and a shapeshifting mimic as she sets out on an adventure to uncover her past. This charming upcoming young adult D&D novel is written

by *New York Times* bestselling author Madeleine Roux, with amazing illustrations by Tim Probert. You can pre-order *Dungeon Academy: No Humans Allowed!* on [Amazon](#).

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NEVERWINTER MMORPG: JEWEL OF THE NORTH UPDATE



(Select to view)

The bustling, cosmopolitan city-state of Neverwinter is often referred to as the Jewel of the North, and a major new update to the **free-to-play Dungeons & Dragons MMORPG *Neverwinter*** has been created using that title. The cultured metropolis in northwest Faerûn also goes by the name the City of Skilled Hands and Cryptic's developers certainly lived up to that ideal as they fashioned some major changes to the Dungeons & Dragons video game.

Playability is the driving force behind many of the new features, including a change to the character level that brings the MMO more

into line with tabletop D&D. Players now gain experience until they reach 20th level and can access epic level content after that, giving it parity with the tabletop game. Lead designer Randy Mosiondz says a lot of thought went into the levelling changes.



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“One of our key motivations is being able to get players to our newest, coolest content as soon as we can. We’ve streamlined the experience to take around ten to twelve hours of gameplay to reach epic level content instead of the thirty to fifty hours that it previously took,” Randy tells *Dragon+*.

“When we’ve released modules in the past—for example, our addition of Ravenloft—players were excited to try it. New players would download the game but then find there are X number of hours of play needed to get to that Ravenloft setting. We wanted to remove the barriers for those people that are excited about trying the newest content.”

“A player might also want to invite a friend to *Neverwinter* to play with them,” adds Executive Producer Matt Powers. “This levelling change allows them to play together as quickly as possible. It’s about having a healthy end-game community but also getting more people into that mix.”



(Select to view)

Characters who are currently anywhere between level one and the previous maximum level of eighty will automatically be boosted to 20th level when the change occurs. A special gear pack they can claim will give them everything they need to start playing epic level content, and there'll also be some help getting to grips with their new powers as they take on higher-level threats.

Players currently learn the basics of the game in a tutorial when they first appear outside the city of Neverwinter and are tasked with defending it against Valindra's undead and the attacking dracolich. But the tutorial system has also been given a major overhaul to help players who are fast-tracking to 20th level. The new Adventurer's Guild that's been introduced in the game's centralised location, Protector's Enclave, acts as a hub for all adventurers to meet and train. And it includes a private training arena, called the Training Room.

“As players progress through the game, they unlock tutorials that either introduce them to new game elements or teach them about the class they're playing. They can return to this Adventurer's Guild as they level up,” Randy says. “And our magical training arena allows them to practice using their powers before they continue on their adventures.”



(Select to view)



YOU'RE BARD!

Following in the footsteps of the oathbound paladin in 2016, the Jewel of the North update also adds the game's first new class in five

years. The bard weaves together quick, deadly swordplay and powerful magical ballads, creating boons for the players and their allies and an orchestra of destruction for enemies. The class offers two unique Paragon Paths, allowing players to choose more of a support role or be more personally involved in combat.

- **Songblade:** These charming swashbucklers are damage dealers who are comfortable at close and mid ranges, dispatching their foes in style with swordplay, magic, and music. This path is for players who want to make use of dramatic spells and supporting songs to enhance their natural combat abilities.
- **Minstrel:** The master musicians support allies from afar with songs of bardic inspiration. These healers can also use music to create psychic attacks and illusions.



(Select to view)

“We want to provide as much customization as possible to our players so they feel that they’re making this experience their own. We looked at a variety of classes and listened to the community, and there were a number of different directions we could have gone in. But the bard is such an expressive class that’s all about personality, and we felt there was a lot for players to explore,” Matt says.



(Select to view)

Part of that expression comes from a unique “Perform” mechanic that allows the bard to play a variety of songs that can enhance, heal, or hurt their targets. Or perhaps they just want to entertain their fellow adventurers following a hard day in the dungeons. “Players can have their bards go into Free Perform mode and simply play music, which we’re finding our preview server players are already doing in taverns,” Matt notes.

GREAT TIME TO ADVENTURE

Whether you’re playing a rogue, cleric, wizard, ranger, fighter, warlock, paladin, barbarian, or the all-new bard, there’s never been a better time to start your *Neverwinter* journey. A new and intuitive Adventures feature makes it even easier to play through content, track your progress, and get some great rewards. As part of this, a number of areas within the game that offer the most compelling stories have been simplified to make them easier to access as a whole.

“We’ve also converted some of the older campaigns into adventures. For example, you can now play through the Acquisitions Inc. material as a single adventure without needing to play any other content in between. It helps compact that story,” Randy explains.

The Neverember Recruitment Event, which will run when the Jewel of the North update launches, is another good way for new players to

get involved. It also benefits existing players who take the opportunity to expand their line up and create a new character. Any new characters who log in during the event will earn extra rewards while levelling, as well as Neverember Incentives that can be exchanged for account-wide rewards.

“Our Neverember event celebrates a time when we believe that people will want to start a new character. So it’s a good jumping on point for new players and the perfect time for existing players who want to try out a new character,” Randy says.

The Jewel of the North update for the *Neverwinter* MMORPG releases on PC ([Steam](#), [Epic Games Store](#), [Arc Games](#)) on July 27 and will launch on Xbox One and PlayStation 4 in Fall 2021.

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D&D Live 2021

The yearly D&D showcase includes chaotic carnivals, musical interludes, cooking standoffs, and B-movie D&D!

by Matt Chapman, John Dodd, Fiona Howat, and Mira Manga

Dungeons & Dragons and **G4** assembled an accomplished crew of adventurers for *D&D Live 2021*. The character sheets were filled, the campaigns exhaustively researched, and the star-studded adventures roared to life on July 16 and 17! Streaming on Peacock as well as all D&D and G4 digital platforms, the annual event delivered two days of laughs and escapades.

The entertainment also included first-look reveals of upcoming D&D storylines (and you can find more exclusive details on those in our *In The Works* section), as well as deep dives into *Magic: The Gathering* sets, and information on a special collaboration with NERDS candy.

You don't have to take our word for how exciting it was, though. We present the best of the livestreams and panels below, listed as they happened, with a few highlights from each to lure you in. Enjoy!

The Chaos Carnival

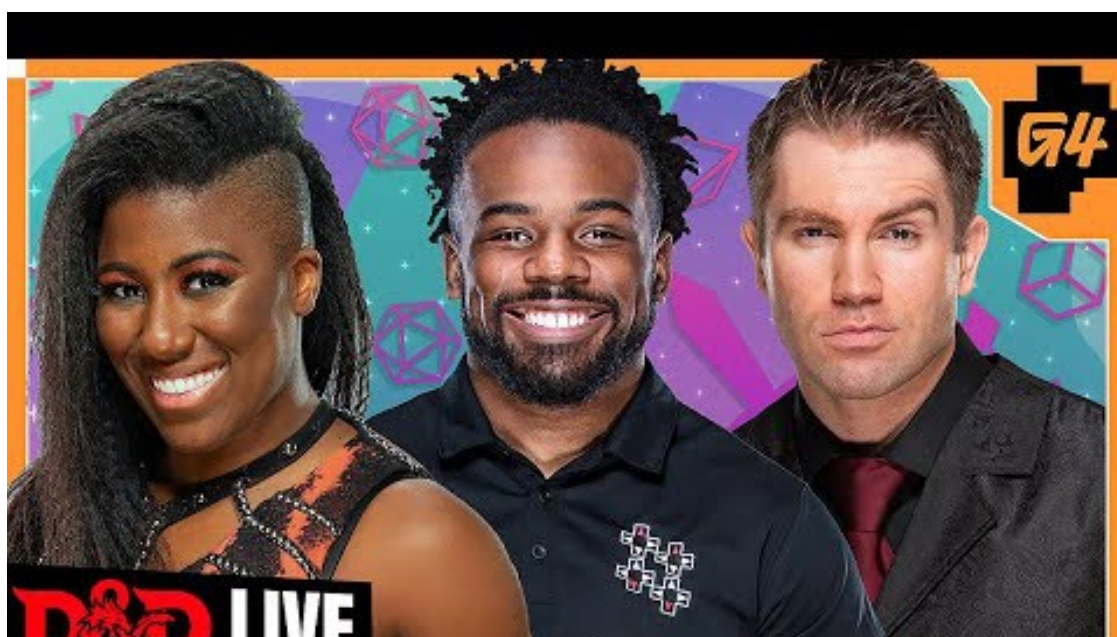
DM: Aabria Iyengar

Players: Xavier Woods, Ember Moon, Mace, and Tyler Breeze

Some of *WWE*'s most adventurous superstars prove they can sell D&D combat as well as they perform wrestling moves. Between the self-destructing dolls and the cartwheeling clowns, the carnival has what they need—if the price of entry isn't too steep. But when you lose that which means most to you, what (or *who*!) might you be willing to give up to get it back?

Come for: A masterclass in how to stun a creature made of pollen.

Stay for: The reactions when the final bell rings.



The Palace of the Vampire Queen

DM: B. Dave Walters

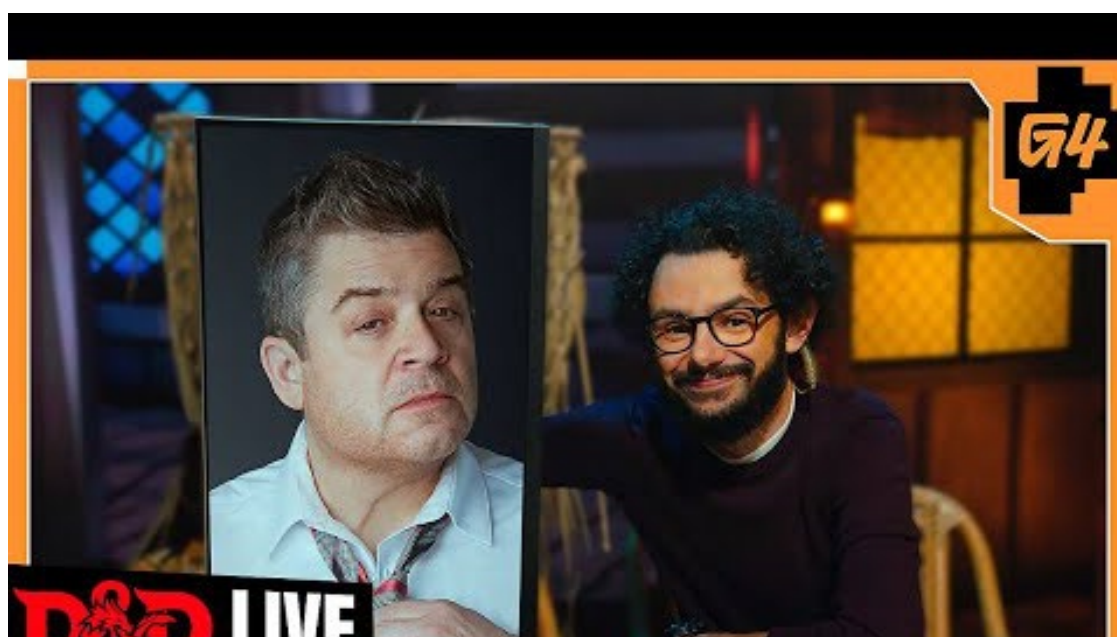
Players: Patton Oswalt, Nick Peine, Marisa Baram, Allisyn Snyder, and Jacob Houston

Join the cast of hit Peacock comedy *A.P. BIO* as they become guests

of the Vampire Queen at a ball that definitely won't suck. The stage is set, but is everyone who they seem? And might the guests have more connections to the other revelers than they bargained for?

Come for: A character so sneaky that even the DM forgets they're outside!

Stay for: An exercise in how beauty can tame the beast.



DM Showdown

Panel Host: Mica Burton

Panel Participants: Becca Scott, Kelly D'Angelo, Vince Caso, and Kailey Bray



Inspired by The Dungeon Masters Challenge, four worthy DMs compete against each other to prove their worth and see who has what it takes to bring home the title. Judged by host Mica Burton, a self-titled “player only/never DM”, our would-be heroes complete challenging tasks to be crowned the best Dungeon Master.

Come for: A fun D&D-inspired gameshow.

Stay for: The chaos that comes from on-the-spot improv!

[Watch the Panel](#)

DM Roundtable

Panel Host: B. Dave Walters

Panel Participants: Kanji Tang, Satine Phoenix, Eric Campbell, and Kate Welch



Five remarkable storytellers from the D&D community share their experiences of what it's like to be a Dungeon Master. This intimate roundtable panel covers a whole range of topics, including handling the biggest “fears” about running a game, how much prep DMs should do, and which rules DMs might want to tweak for their own games.

Come for: Essential tips on becoming a great Dungeon Master.

Stay for: DMs advocating minimal rule knowledge!

[Watch the Panel](#)

Lost Odyssey: Last Light

DM: Kate Welch

Players: Jack Black, Tiffany Haddish, Lauren Lapkus, Jason Mewes, Kevin Smith, and Reggie Watts

DM extraordinaire Kate Welch expertly corrals a boisterous bunch of comedians on this chaotic quest to discover why the monsters of the land are losing their magic. Nothing is straightforward but everything is entertaining: whether the party is tormenting a red dragon,

charming barkeeps or wrestling with their vegan consciences, expect impassioned speeches, belly laughs, and unicorn farts aplenty!

Come for: Jack Black rapturously bursting into song.

Stay for: Tiffany Haddish's flirty unicorn.



Cosplay Cooking: A Heroes Feast

Panel Host: Malika Lim Eubank

Panel Participant: Stella Chuu



Chaotic hungry halflings, Malika and Stella, come armed with ingredients and the mouthwatering D&D cookbook *Heroes' Feast*. Preparing the Community Cheeses fondue and Honey Drizzled Cream Puffs recipes shouldn't be too complicated but our heroines troll themselves with a d4 and the roulette of random ingredients! The infectious giggles and good vibes make their cooking efforts as spicy and sweet as the honey in the cream puffs.

Come for: An ingredient-squeezing stamina that suggests Strength as a dump stat!

Stay for: The yummy results of their culinary questing.

Watch the Panel

Flubbybonks and Guzzleshucks

DM: Amy Vorpahl

Players: DrLupo, Negaoryx, Ify Nwadiwe, Kevin Pereira, Adam Sessler, and Fiona Nova



What happens when you type Pereira and Sessler into a gnomish wizard name generator? You get Flubbybonks and Guzzleshucks. As inoffensive as that sounds, our story takes place when the resonance

of the forest is disrupted and evil runs wild, with the stakes higher than they've ever been. Can our heroes stop partying long enough to meet the challenge?

Come for: Amy's performance as a killer pumpkin.

Stay for: The chance to learn who the best dancer is at the table.

[Watch the Game](#)

Beadle & Grimm's Faster, Purple Worm! Kill! Kill!

DM: Jon Ciccolini

Host: Bill Rehor

Players: B. Dave Walters, Deborah Ann Woll, Seth Green, and Xander Jeanneret

Epic adventures don't have to be long adventures! If you've got sixty minutes to kill, the twisted minds at Beadle & Grimm's Pandemonium Warehouse have a new way to play D&D. Join these four brave adventurers as they take their first halting steps towards destiny, with the youth and optimism that only 1st level characters can truly possess. It'll probably end badly, but that's the point!

Come for: The incredible [B-movie promo video](#).

Stay for: One of the most powerful creatures in D&D lore.



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Streaming Highlights

This issue we showcase LGBTQ+ friendly streams, step through the Stargate to play D&D with the Tech Bandits, and listen to Dark Dice being rolled by a Hollywood A-lister!

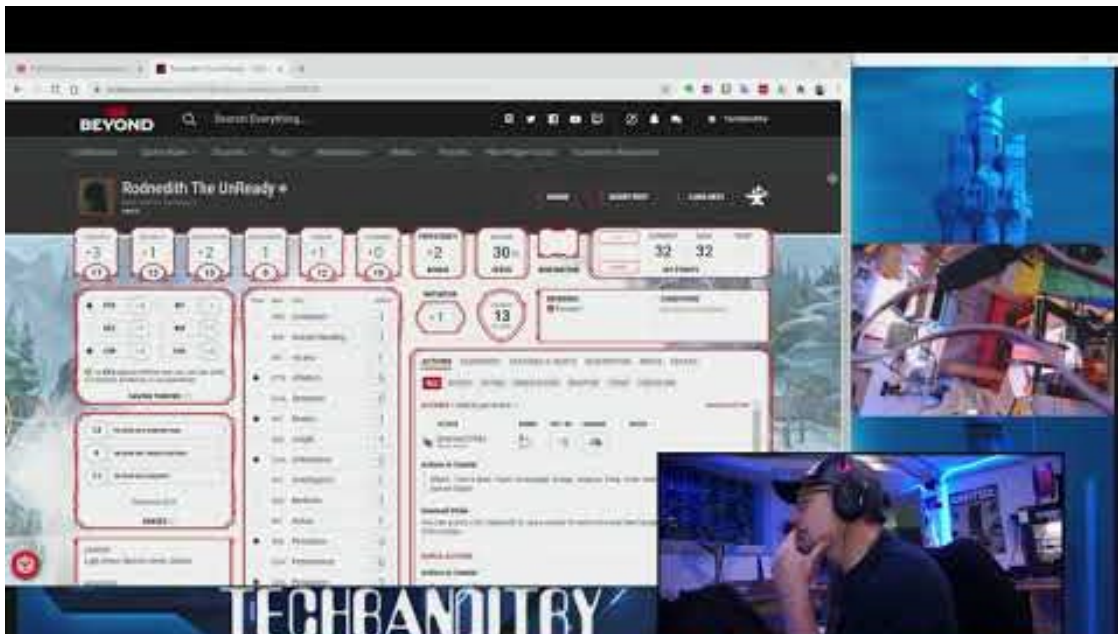


TECH BANDITS

“We’ve been doing **Tech Bandits** now for four or five years,” says English–Canadian–American actor, writer, director, and voice actor David Hewlett, known for his role as Dr. Rodney McKay on the *Stargate* TV series. His education program hopes to inspire a lifelong love of learning in the next generation of brilliant minds, introducing technology into schools as part of that mission.

“At its base level, Tech Bandits is a lot of robots. When I go into schools, I take a bunch of Arduino kits, Raspberry Pi computers, and these great little BBC Micro circuit boards that you clip sensors onto and can add other things that the kids might like to play with. I used

to do this at a local public school and then there was a school strike so the kids came to my house. My wife asked, ‘How many kids?’ and I replied, ‘It can’t be more than 25.’



David says one of the areas that really speaks to the kids is assistive tech. He describes that technology as something that can be programmed to help someone achieve something and says it’s an area the kids immediately “get”—with one student in particular seeing its benefits to everyday life.

“There was a young woman in the first class who was always in the background. But she came pushing to the front when I brought in a robotic arm and she told me, ‘I have a robotic arm. It’s in my locker. Can I get it?’ I was thrilled and said, ‘This is Tech Bandits, if you’ve got a robotic arm please bring it.’ She came back with a prosthetic arm, which is not what I was imagining. It was government issue and she often refused to wear it, but once we started programming the arm with her she was so excited about the opportunities. And that was it for me. I was hooked. I wanted to do Tech Bandits every day.”

“Most of the kids in Tech Bandits are very much by the book and do the work and do very well in school. But I have this strong belief that there are some people who just aren’t equipped to succeed at school, whether it’s because it can’t hold their interest or they’re not picking it up fast enough. I failed out of high school myself. I’ve always loved learning but I didn’t enjoy school. I feel those are the kids we want to be working with in Tech Bandits, because it’s so much more

rewarding. And they often have amazingly different perspectives on things.”

Having started life in a classroom before shifting to other venues, when the pandemic completely changed the way people gather together, Tech Bandits went online. Originally, David used Zoom calls to connect with the kids but he quickly realized that they didn’t respond as well to those because they now associated them with their school work.

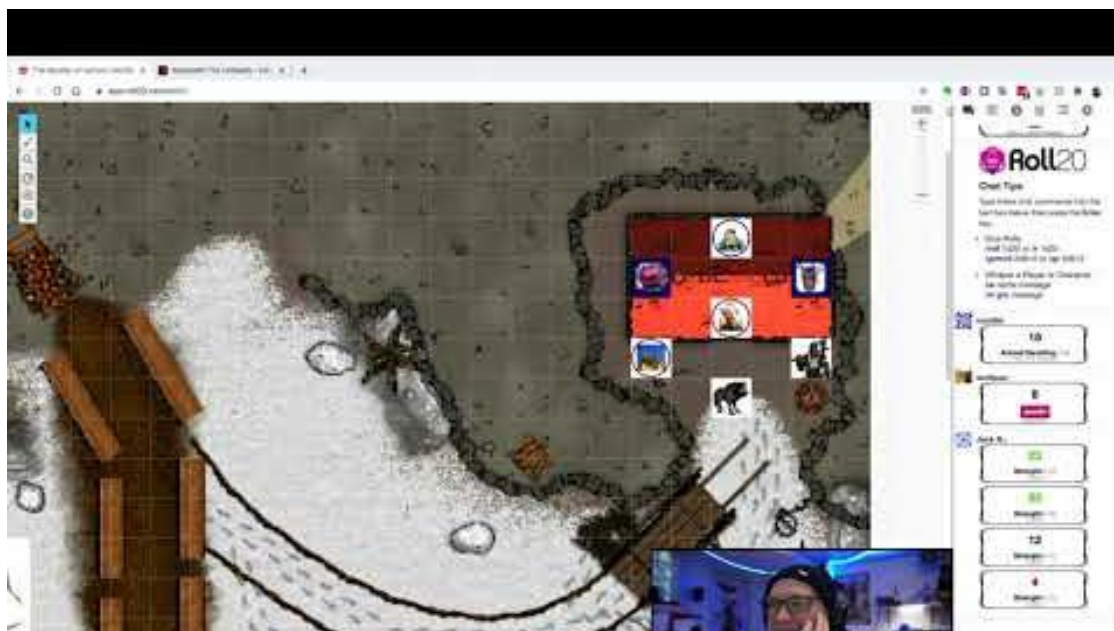
“When I mentioned the possibility of streaming, their secret—and in many cases very loud—desires to be streamers was obvious,” he says. “One of the reasons Tech Bandits exists is that I want to learn more, too. I let them lead the way and they set us up on Discord.”

Blending together technology and Dungeons & Dragons content has proved to be a great way to entertain and inform an audience, and David’s ability to merge those elements at an early age suggests it was always in the cards.

“I loved the paraphernalia and reading all the D&D books. But I didn’t have people to play Dungeons & Dragons with because I didn’t hang out with the right kind of friends,” David remembers. “Instead, I was playing D&D by myself using my computer. I would write Commodore 64 programs to handle the Dungeon Mastering for me, creating random dice rolls.”

Atlanta-based Dungeon Master James Gurney has the task of shepherding the Tech Bandits—and David—on their D&D adventures. Having grown up in Brighton, England and obtained his PhD in Nottingham, James studied a post-doctorate in France for two years before moving to the United States.

“I always say that James is our Dungeon Master *and* our science master,” David jokes. “I love that the kids get to see him answering questions online about Covid and viruses and science topics in general, and then he’s also running their Dungeons & Dragons game.”



James and David first connected through a mutual friend, streamer Qdragon, a D&D player and experimental chef who creates videos and pictures of his culinary masterpieces despite being unable to move because of a condition called spinal muscular atrophy (check out *Cooking With Q* on [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#)). One of the pair's first adventures saw David stepping through the Stargate once more, as James led him on an adventure using the *Stargate RPG* that Wyvern Gaming created using the D&D fifth edition Open Gaming License.

"D&D had been in the cards for a while. It was back in 2015 when we first talked about playing 3.5 edition. Didn't you find some D&D books in the trash," James reminds David, who confirms a dumpster dive did take place: "Someone had thrown them out and I was like, 'They can't do that!' In my Trash Bandits role, I rescued them. My wife was not thrilled. But I've got an entire cabinet of them now."

"I offered to give David a refresh of how to play D&D, so he could learn the mechanics of fifth edition," James says, unaware that his would-be student would sneak a peek at the TTRPG system before that game even took place.

"I cheated and did a cram session before I went in so I had a clue about what I was doing," David confesses. "I'm a nerd, but I also play a nerd. I felt like I had a certain amount of rep to protect there. That got us back into D&D again, and then the kids wanted to play."

And that was that. I felt like I couldn't say no."

Prior to running the D&D game for Tech Bandits, James has DMed for both adults and children with special needs. He says running games focusing on accessibility has given him so much joy, especially when the players are able to put themselves in his shoes.

"One of the great things about this game is when you get a kid saying, 'I can see what you're describing. I am imagining what you're telling me.' That may not be a mental muscle they've exercised much," he tells *Dragon+*.

"There are some personal friends of mine whose child has severe autism. The couple met playing *Middle-Earth Role Playing* and we decided to have a game of D&D. Their son struggles to sit through a 22-minute TV episode, so they wondered how he might deal with two to three hours of gaming. He loves it! He will sit there playing with us, chatting away and socializing. I think for them that was a big deal."



The important thing for David is that the kids are still learning along the way. He suggests that D&D is an ideal platform for them to explore problem solving and collaboration in an environment that doesn't feel like school. The TTRPG world of Dungeons & Dragons also provides a gaming thrill they may not have experienced anywhere else.

“In a lot of games, everything is laid out for the players. They have a very limited number of options and things they’re supposed to do and if they get stuck, they can look up endless videos online showing them how to do it. There’s none of that with D&D. Sure, you can watch videos and see other people play the game. But you can’t know what’s about to happen in James’s twisted imagination,” he says.

“D&D is not about winning, that’s the neat thing about the game. And I think that idea is new to most kids. And when you mess up in game it can be just as much fun—if not more—than getting it right! With D&D, it’s all about embracing those mistakes and the chaos that ensues.”

Tech Bandits’ D&D sessions air on the *Techbanditry* Twitch channel and previous episodes can also be found on David Hewlett’s YouTube channel.

DARK DICE

Dark Dice is a horror actual-play D&D podcast run by Travis Vengroff and his wife Kaitlin Statz, who’ve been operating as a two-person production team for six years. Their collaboration with voice artists from around the world, many of whom are first timers, is designed to help those actors get their careers off the ground. Their performances combine with Travis and Kaitlin’s innovative use of soundscapes to help create an added layer of immersion for the listener. The latest rising star to join the cast of *Dark Dice*’s second season is... wait, this can’t be right, it says “Jeff Goldblum” in our notes!



“The answer to how we got Jeff Goldblum to appear in our podcast is, ‘I’m still not sure.’ When you ask someone like Jeff and that person doesn’t immediately say, ‘No’, you think it might be too good to be true. But Jeff likes to work on things that are fun, and he’s a

very fun person to be around,” Travis tells *Dragon+*.



“I’d also read that Jeff works with people he admires and can be picky about the projects that he chooses, so the first season of *Dark Dice* may have helped rope him in. I think our work ethic and what we’ve accomplished in this space helped—we’ve released content every two weeks consistently for six years and have built up a lot of goodwill in the audio drama community, as well as doing panels, live shows,

educational work, and winning a bunch of awards along the way.

“I laid out the details very clearly in my pitch so Jeff understood exactly what we were asking, as we were sure he’d be very busy. I think that may have improved our odds. I said ‘Here’s the time schedule, here’s a potential character you could play, and here’s a picture of that character,’ which Marcel Mercado drew for us. When we asked Marcel to create that, he said, ‘Jeff will see this?’ And I replied, ‘Jeff will see this.’”

You created Jeff’s character, an elven sorcerer named Balmer. Did he have any input on that creation process or add any further nuance to the character?

There were some modifications made on his end. But I believe that he was drawn to the character based on the backstory I had already created for Balmer and that prefilled character sheet.

What’s the *Dark Dice* production setup like?

We’re remote record on our own computers, and play in ‘theatre of the mind’, with players generally rolling physical dice. It’s all digital, recorded in Zoom as well so if we have any issues with the audio quality, I can ask people to do retakes. It’s handy in those spots where you can hear the refrigerator or other noises in the background. Our cast is located across the world on different continents, with our first season taking place in six different time zones.

The game concept for season two follows competing parties as two stories unfold at the same time. How does running those different strands work? Part A also feeds into Part B very specifically for one of the characters. Will those parties ever meet?

One team is completely unaware of the other team and is off having their own adventures. But the intent is that the two parties will eventually come together. Because that first team is being pursued by the other team, who may be feeling a little vengeful and have an interest in meeting up to have a firm talk—with blades.

It seems as if anything truly can happen in your game. At the end of the first episode of *The Long Road*, you namecheck “our sixth player” who never features because they died before their introduction!

Tanya’s character died in that first episode and she never really got to play. She’s a regular on our other shows and is blind, using custom character sheets and special dice that she can feel. She’ll absolutely be back, but as a different character.

You narrate a lot of the story and the action scenes, which moves the combat along quite quickly. Do you play out those scenes as normal, and then narrate what happens?

The combat narrative is added in post, with music and sound effects. The players describe their actions and I use what they say almost word for word, though I may add further descriptive text or a little more gore to make it more dramatic. But the goal is to capture the essence of a round of combat in a shorter period of time, even though that exchange happened over the course of twenty minutes when played in real life. I think the audience appreciates us condensing any redundant information as long as they still get to feel the heart-jumping moments, which we absolutely keep.

The story takes place in a homebrew D&D world, which you first began work on when you were quite young. What’s that setting like?

It’s a very dark world where almost everyone is in the moral grey. Humanity is not the apex predator. There are dragons that are so massive and terrifying they’re not normally challenged or killed. All the scary monsters that you were told lived in the woods and the other shadowy places when you were a kid exist there. That forces

people to band together for survival and a lot of them would be too scared to go off adventuring on their own.

I've recently been working with a team of people on the world building that I initially established as a kid. It's been a really big endeavor. There are a few silly things that I wrote when I was younger that fit surprisingly well, such as a note that the elves in the desert can't get sand in their eyes. Adult me thought biologically, camels don't either. Why? It's because of a membrane. Maybe those elves have adapted a similar membrane! Suddenly we're adapting these ideas from childish fantasy to include explanations that make sense biologically.

With 25 years of existing history in your world, since you first created it as a child, how much are you able to include?

I do incorporate a lot of it, especially some of the world-shifting events that occurred in the earlier years. For example, a part of the world was covered in darkness when the undead appeared overnight. A more recent philosophical discussion I've been having with the team is whether suddenly becoming a member of the undead has an effect on your individual identity? It doesn't mean that you're suddenly evil, because you retain some semblance of your memories. It's been fun to adapt and modernize those old ideas, especially with older NPCs.

But we go really deeply into the world building to lend events an extra layer of immersion. If the characters encounter a person who's rambling and might seem as if they've lost their mind, the things they're saying may actually make sense if examined and might become prophecies for future seasons. Or if they're speaking a language and the characters can pick out words, those words may come up later. The more you can throw in, the more fun it is. Languages are also a part of D&D that often gets ignored, which we've really leaned into. It's incredibly fun.

Episode one of *The Long Road* ends with talk of Jeff's character singing in episode two...

We had two minutes when technology failed, and while we were waiting Jeff decided it might be fun to hum a few tunes. Brandon Strader, Steven Melin, and I wrote melodies around it, and Mike Pettry orchestrated our ideas. Mike works on Disney projects so he

gave Jeff the fully Disney princess musical treatment, which is hilarious. When talking about our show I also normally say ‘come for the horror, stay for the hurdy gurdy.’ We have a lot of fantasy music that we’ve created from scratch, some of which is now orchestral, but all of which features medieval-era instruments. I’ve also been personally working on an infernal language compendium, to help our choir who will be singing four or five songs in the infernal language. It’s been hard to translate words in infernal that have complex verb conjugations so I’ve put together a somewhat extensive dictionary that describes the rules of that language and how to speak it. It’s been a journey.

***Dark Dice: The Long Road* airs every month on [Acast](#). Fifth edition adventure *Domain of the Nameless God*, which is based on the first season of *Dark Dice*, is [available on the DMs Guild](#).**

DRAGON TALK

Every week the doors of the Dungeons & Dragons castle are flung open and Shelly Mazzanoble and Greg Tito invite the audience inside for exclusive interviews and previews! They sit down with celebrities, pop culture personalities, and creators to talk about the latest phenomena in roleplaying, video games, comics, novels, movies, and television as it all relates to D&D. And the *Dragon Talk* team have collected a few highlights from May and June 2021 to enjoy:

[Watch the May Highlights](#)

[Watch the June Highlights](#)

Check out *Dragon Talk* interviews with [Kate Welch](#), [Shane Salk & Dana Powers](#), and [Tanya DePass & B. Dave Walters](#), among many others!

But there was one show that stood out in June, as *Dragon Talk* celebrated its 300th episode! The milestone was marked by personal tributes from friends of the show Matt Mercer, R.A. Salvatore, B.

Dave Walters, Rob Daviau, Krystina Arielle, and many, many more including a very cute special animation from Kyle Balda!

Greg and Shelly were live as they reflected on 300 episodes, before welcoming a number of special guests including Erika Fermina, Bart Carroll, Ryan Marth, and Lisa Carr, while still finding time to go over all the latest announcements including *The Wild Beyond the Witchlight*, *Strixhaven: A Curriculum of Chaos*, *D&D Celebration* and more!



WizKids Paint Party!

The *Dragon Talk* hosts also grabbed their brushes and headed to the virtual WizKids studio to take part in a livestream painting party/tutorial. Professional DM and painter of minis Vee Mus'e helped Shelly and Greg turn their WizKids Paint Night Kit into a red slaad they can be proud of. "Look at his mouth! You can see he has teeth," Shelly says of her first-ever painted mini.

[Watch WizKids Paint Party: Red Slaad](#)

New episodes of *Dragon Talk*, the official Dungeons & Dragons podcast, release every week and you can [listen here](#) or [watch here](#).

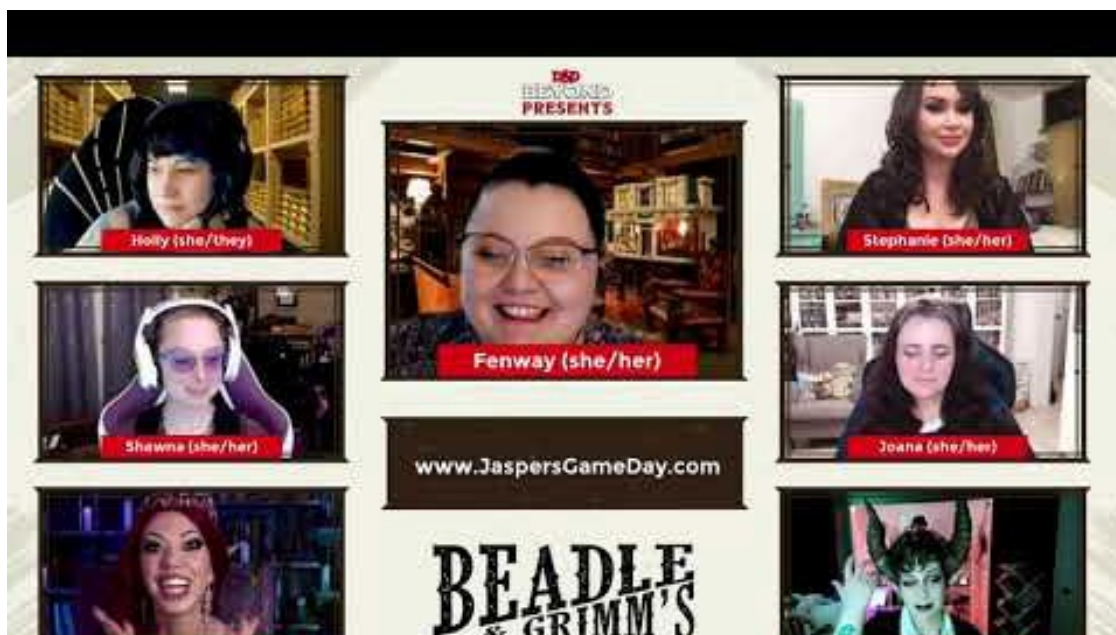
JASPER'S GAME WEEK

Jasper's Game Week ran from April 30 to May 10, 2021, raising money for suicide prevention and mental health charities. The gaming kicked off on [D&D Beyond's Twitch channel](#), followed by five days on [Mini Terrain Domain](#) (with broadcasting during the non-US hours on [Ardent Roleplay's Twitch channel](#), with the help of Meeples & Dragons from Australia). That was followed by three days of conventions, one of which was the [D&D Virtual Play Weekend](#).

Dragon+ has picked out a few choice episodes from the masses of games which made up 2021's monster fundraising event.

D&D Beyond: Game 3

Fenway Jones, founder of the mental health charity Jasper's Game Week, took the reigns as Holly Conrad, Diana DiMicco, Shawna Houston, Joanna Kucharksa, Stephanie Michelle, and Satine Phoenix follow visions of a captured dragon via a tiny house in the middle of nowhere. "Blame Satine's dice," Fenway says after a particularly nasty crit in a tense combat.



MiniTerrainDomain: Day 1, Game 1

The jinks are high as six characters (including an owlbear barbarian and a mimic assassin) are pulled into a Domain of Dread by a curse

that resides deep within them. *Dragon+* Editor-in-Chief Matt Chapman leads this unusual bunch of adventurers on their quest to answer some tough questions: Will the world's greatest gumbo sate this plane's hungry creatures? Why doesn't the cleric sleep? How can messianic bard Bragdo understand everyone? And why does everything keep attacking goblin wizard Hazmat Whistlebloom?



D&D Beyond: Game 7

DM Deborah Ann Woll extends an invite to the multiverse's most exclusive event! And as a group of individuals exits the coach and checks into the Eagle's Rest, it's going to be a celebration to die for. "The party starts at eight. Don't be late, you wouldn't want to miss the feast," the desk manager says, as the group watches an incredible sunset ahead of a night to remember—and an after party to forget.

[Watch on Twitch](#)

Aussie Day 5, Game 1

It's all about the characters in R.J. Cresswell's thoroughly enjoyable game, as a cowardly paladin, a cleric who worships themselves, a tattooed rogue, a half-drow who's not happy to be here, a terrible undercover bard, and a Waterdeep watchman possessed by a homicidal hydra spirit, all try to reach the only ship that ever leaves the Domain of Dread they find themselves in.



D&D Beyond

Jasper's Game Day has started a monthly one-shot series starring various personalities and guests, in partnership with D&D Beyond. The first show aired in June as DM Kailey Bray led an adventure to find a legendary Feywild crown.

[Watch the Stream](#)

You can find more information about Jasper's Game Day at the [official website](#), make a [charitable donation](#) or connect with them on [Discord](#), [Twitter](#), and [Facebook](#).

Pride Month 2021

Dungeons & Dragons provides an inclusive environment where people can come together to become whoever they want to be and explore a new side of themselves. To help celebrate Pride month, Jack Dixon, Editor of [Rainbo magazine](#), chooses his favorite LGBTQ+ friendly communities and streams.

QUEER DUNGEONEERS

Improviseational fantasy D&D podcast *Queer Dungeoneers* follows a rag-tag bunch of adventurers as they make a deal with the devil, and put their lives on the line.

Without spoiling the plot, the premise is that the party has three months to kill three gods. This task sees them travel across vast continents to learn more than anyone should ever know—including the fact that the gods are the least of their worries!

Across its runtime (almost 100 episodes so far) the show tackles themes of power, identity, and the self, but more than anything it's a lot of fun!

Find them at: The [Queer Dungeoneers Podbean website](#).

Recommended starting point: The introductory [Episode 0](#) is currently the best place to start, although a little birdie tells us that Season 2 will be kicking off in just a few months!



CHASING TALES

Chasing Tales is a recent entry to the medium. It's a majority LGBTQ+ D&D actual-play series, with players hailing from France and the United Kingdom.

This ongoing Dungeons & Dragons homebrew campaign features queer player characters, including so-called “disaster twunks”, queer female power couples (sometimes with swords!), asexual cuties, non-binary elves, and more. In addition to the PCs, a host of wonderfully crafted NPCs help bring *Chasing Tales*’ queer stories to life.

As well as their main campaign, the folks at *Chasing Tales* also run special one-shots and mini-arcs (usually featuring special guests) in the name of fundraising for queer charities. To see some of their hijinks, check out their [Pride highlight reel](#)!

Find them at: *Chasing Tales* broadcasts live on [Twitch](#) every Thursday evening (6:30pm BST / 10.30am PT / 1.30pm EST), and all previous episodes are available on [YouTube](#).

Recommended starting point: We’d recommend [Episode 37](#) as a good jumping-on point, as it kicks off the latest story arc. The cast of characters are well explained along the way, so you won’t feel left behind.



DARK DICE

For Pride 2020, the *Dark Dice* team ran a light-hearted one-shot called “*Tiefling in the Details*“, which sees one of the campaign’s main adventurers, Iaus Innskeep, embark upon one of his biggest adventures yet: speed dating!

Instead of rolling dice, the stream raised over \$10,000 for [the Trevor Project](#), which is a fantastic achievement.

Find them at: [The Acast network](#).

Recommended starting point: The speed dating episode “*Tiefling in the Details*“, and its spoiler-titled [follow-up episode](#).

QUEENS OF ADVENTURE/QOA: LEGENDS

“It wouldn’t be the first time I’ve woken up in a strange room with strange people.”

– Kitty Powers

What happens when you introduce a troupe of drag queens to the Dungeons & Dragons universe? You get *Queens of Adventure*!

Join Dungeon Master [Matt Baume](#) and a roster of seasoned Seattle drag queens in a quest to save the world and prove themselves worthy of the power of the historic Drag Houses.

At time of writing, there’s over thirty hours of queer goodness in the main story arc, which follows the (mis)adventures of a party that’s also known as Bootie and the Hofish. If you laughed at that name, then this campy, fun podcast may be exactly what you’re looking for.

Find them at: Both [Queens of Adventure](#) and [QoA: Legends](#) are available on Spotify.

Recommended starting point: To get a taste of *Queens of Adventure*, check out their series of live shows. *Queens of Adventure: Legends* features special guest appearances from *RuPaul’s Drag Race* alumni BenDeLaCreme, Utica Queen, and Rock M. Sakura. Our personal recommendation is the [DragCon live show](#) from 2018, which revolves around an inter-dimensional being that seeks out drag queens to see if they’re truly *legendary*. It’s a hilarious one-shot from start to finish.

LAMBERT HOUSE PRIDE SPECIAL

Dungeon Master Kate Welch leads Trystan Falcone, Jeremy Crawford, Omega Jones, A.J. Lamarque, and Anthony Rapp in the latest *Acquisitions Incorporated: The “C” Team* adventure.

If there’s one thing you should remember in the Forgotten Realms, it’s your anniversary! Join Documancer Walnut Dankgrass (played by Trystan) on her quest to stay out of the dog(/bear/weasel/wolf)house.

All proceeds of the stream supported **Lambert House**, a center that empowers lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth through developing leadership, social, and life skills. You can **donate directly to Lambert House** or support the charity by snapping up the **Pinny Arcade Pride Set**, created by Penny Arcade Lead Designer Gavin Greco.



D&D Pride Shirts

For the fourth consecutive year, Wizards Pride ERG is running a Pride Shirt Fundraiser, including Dungeons & Dragons shirts



that directly support **Lambert House**. Shop the designs, including community-specific logos for a number of franchises, at **MTG Pro Shop**.

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Magic: The Gathering - Adventures in the Forgotten Realms Exclusive Card Reveals

Magic joins the party with its D&D debut as we
preview Ebondeth, Black, Green, and Adult
Gold Dragons!



Like **Progenitus** meeting a tarrasque for a spot of afternoon tea, the mighty worlds of *Magic: The Gathering* and Dungeons & Dragons have come together in blissful harmony to create a unified gaming experience. The new *Magic: The Gathering – Adventures in*

the Forgotten Realms set contains 301 regular cards (including 20 basic lands) and launches online July 8, with prerelease events for the physical cards running from July 16 and booster packs officially on sale July 23, 2021.



As you'll learn in a few pages' time, the "Dungeon" element of the *MTG* set will see players taking excursions into some of the most famous (and deadly!) environments from the D&D tabletop roleplaying game. And as displayed on our cover, where we feature the work of Lucas Graciano, the "& Dragons" element of the TTRPG is also fantastically served in this upcoming *Magic: The Gathering* set.

Lucas's Dracolich isn't the only incredible art we're showcasing from this official Dungeons & Dragons set. *Dragon+* is living up to its name and providing an exclusive look at three more impressive beasts—all dragons! Check out these never-before-seen cards from *Magic: The Gathering – Adventures in the Forgotten Realms*.



Our cover star is Ebondeath, Dracolich and you'll *wish* this legendary zombie black dragon was mythical when it pops out of your opponent's graveyard for the umpteenth time in a game. All four of the creature cards we're revealing come in full art and standard versions, although Ebondeath is the only one performing a superhero landing pose in the landscape shot.



The uncommon Black Dragon looks suitably fierce for such a classic D&D creature. And it knows how to properly greet an opponent's creature when it first appears on the battlefield, dousing it with acidic breath. You really see that -3/-3 effect on the standard version of the card—those poor soldiers never stood a chance!





Not to be outdone, the uncommon Green Dragon destroys any creature that takes damage on the turn it comes into play, and just look at that poison breath fly. The impressive aerial shot on the full art card is as breathtaking as it is terrifying, while the portrait view also begs the question: how much are they paying these soldiers!?



“Gold dragons are the greatest of the metallic dragons in size, power, and wisdom,” professes the flavor text on the standard version of the Adult Gold Dragon card. And with an impressive selection of abilities on offer (flying, lifelink, *and* haste), these rare creatures live

up to that billing.

Given that the **Dragon God Tiamat** allows you to search your library for up to five dragon cards with different names to add to your hand, we expect you'll be stacking your deck with a few of these beauties.

Magic: The Gathering – Adventures in the Forgotten Realms is released for *Magic Online* and *MTG Arena* on July 8, 2021. Prerelease events for the physical cards begin on July 16, ahead of their official on-sale date of July 23, 2021. Visit the ***Magic: The Gathering website*** to see all the card previews for *Adventures in the Forgotten Realms*.

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When Magic: The Gathering Met Dungeons & Dragons

Peter Adkison and Steve Conard take a wander through the history of Magic: The Gathering and its early ties to D&D.

When *Adventures in the Forgotten Realms* releases in July, it officially brings the Dungeons & Dragons multiverse into the collectible card game for the first time. Dungeons will be delved, five-headed dragons will summon their brethren, drow elf heroes will dish out twin-scimitar damage, and all will be well with these two worlds as they collide beautifully.

But it won't be the first time the influence of D&D has been seen in *Magic: The Gathering*. The silver-bordered *Unstable* set previously included the mythic rare artifact **The Sword of Dungeons & Dragons**, which packed an amazing amount of D&D lore onto a single card (not only did it provide protection from rogues and clerics, if the equipped creature dealt combat damage to a player it summoned a gold dragon—a process that repeated if you rolled a natural 20 on a twenty-sided die!).

Yet even that item showing off *Magic*'s lighter side isn't the first D&D influence to bleed into the card game, as some of the early set designers would look to their D&D campaigns for inspiration when populating the worlds of Dominaria. It seems appropriate practice for a company whose very existence grew out of those connected, long-running D&D campaigns.

“I always like to say that when we went to university, we minored in computer science and majored in D&D. Peter and I were hardcore Dungeons & Dragons players since the late '70s, as were all five of the original Wizards of the Coast founders and our close friends. And it was our love of roleplaying that ultimately led to us founding the company, spurred on by Peter Adkison,” reveals Steve Conard.



Steve Conard

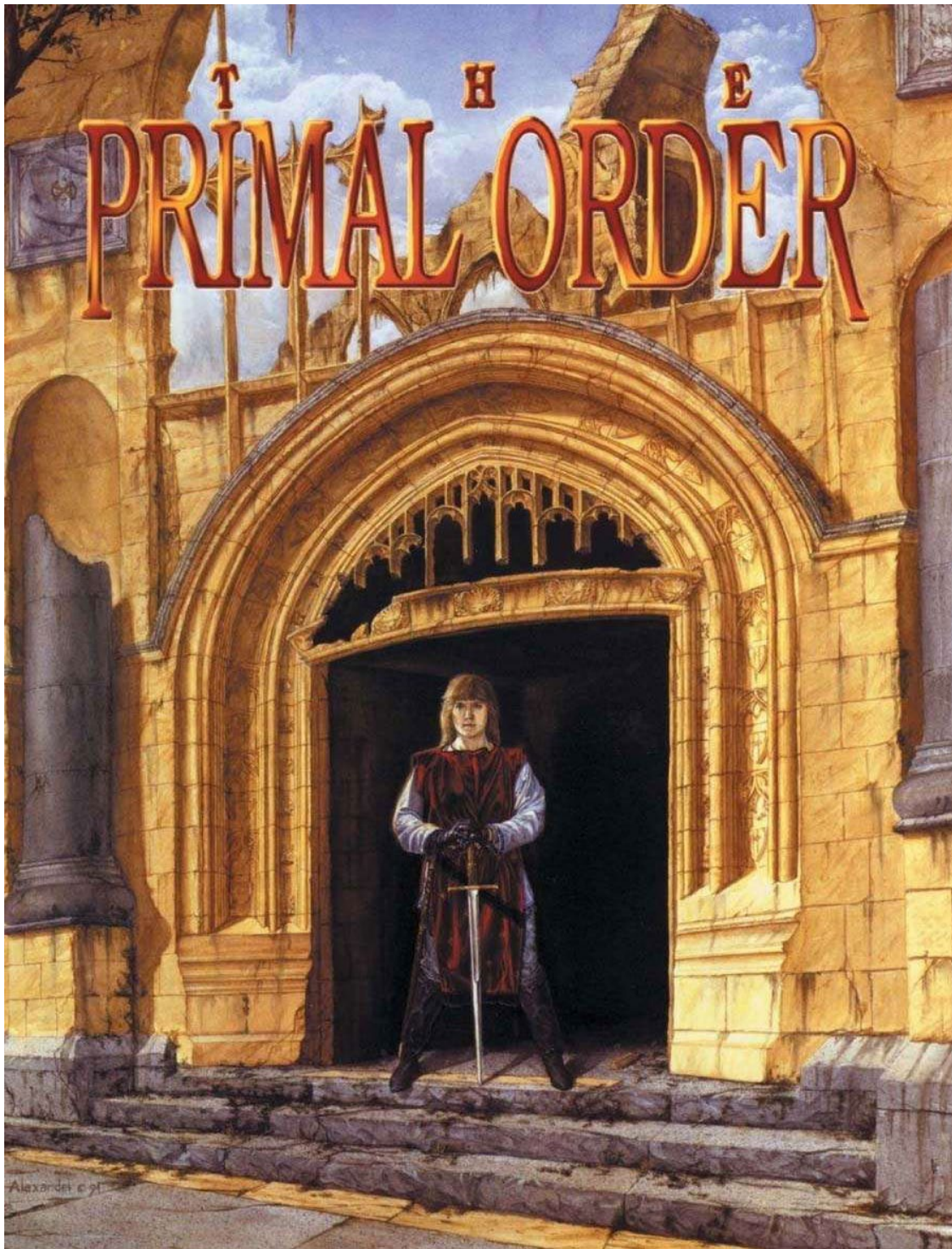
The members of the gaming group that would become business partners played in each other's D&D campaigns, bouncing between half a dozen thriving worlds. The individual locations of this multiverse were connected by a sophisticated portal system—with its own rules and regulations—that allowed players to travel back and forth between games. And it was a campaign run by DM Butch van Dyck, set in a world called Taragarden, that gave the company its name.



Peter Adkison

“Butch’s game featured a group called the Wizards of the Coast and they were badass. Each member had stars on their sleeve. And if someone from this guild showed up at a battle with four stars on their arm, it was time to back the hell up!” Peter Adkison remembers.

“When we had a conversation about starting a game company, I think it was Darrell Judd who came straight out and said, ‘We should call it Wizards of the Coast.’ And immediately that tied into the West Coast, but also brought with it the emotions that we had about this guild. There was no discussion after that. It was the only name ever floated for the company.”



GOD MODE

The epic nature of those high-level D&D games had a huge influence on Wizards of the Coast. The company's first-ever product was called *The Primal Order* and it explained how to play as a deity in Dungeons & Dragons. And nowhere is that high-level influence seen more than in the *Legends* set for *Magic: The Gathering*. *Legends*, it turns out, is the correct term, as many of the characters who feature in that set were God-level NPCs from those overlapping D&D

campaigns.

“When my peers would say, ‘Okay, Steve, go design a *Magic* set’, my first thought was, ‘Where are the heroes?’ When you summon a skeleton or a zombie, it assumes there are millions of them to draw from. I knew that we needed serious, legendary heroes,” Steve recalls. “Our high-level D&D campaigns translated over so easily into *Legends*.”

The named heroes aren’t the only powerful creatures introduced in the *Magic: The Gathering – Legends* set. Peter had created the concept of elder dragons for his world, Chaldea, and as soon as Steve heard about them they immediately captured his imagination.

“Once Peter introduced me to elder dragons, I populated my own world with them. Elder dragons weren’t technically gods but they were in the same peer group. When we created *Legends* for *Magic: The Gathering*, I knew we had to throw elder dragons in there. Five of them made it into the set,” Steve tells *Dragon+*.

“The day *Legends* was released, I walked to my local neighborhood game store and the line went down the block. I went and sat in the store and I didn’t say who I was, I just watched as people opened *Legends* packs. And they’d shout, ‘Oh my God, elder dragons!’”

The elder dragons that appear in the *Legends* card set were all given their names by Steve (except for Chromium). Rather than follow the Tolkien method of researching an existing language to take his cue from, Steve named these creatures by trying to mimic how he thought the dragons might sound when they speak. That hasn’t stopped super fans trying to work out the hidden meanings of creatures such as Vaevictis Asmadi.

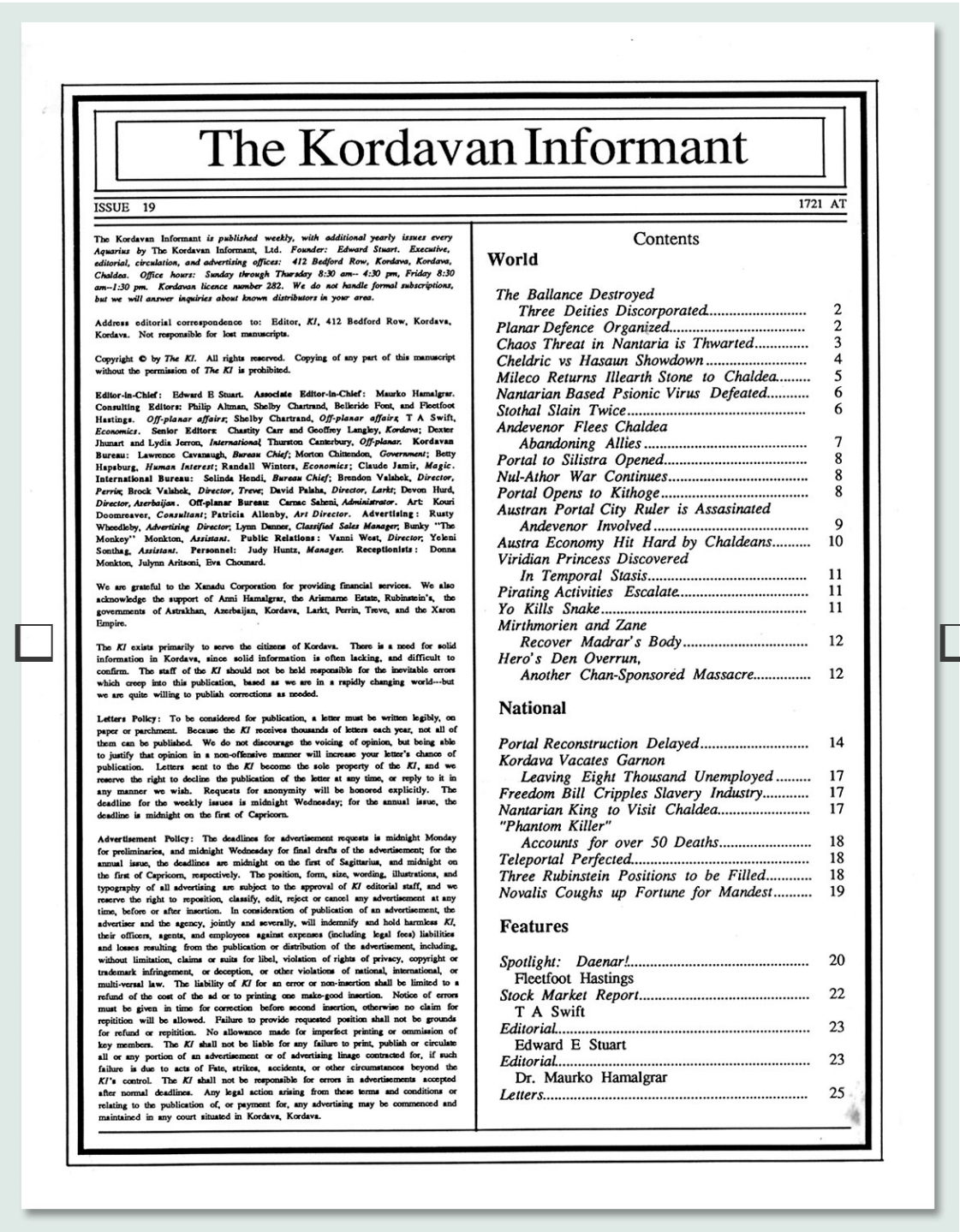
“I received a fan letter that said, ‘Okay, I’ve gone through Latin and figured out what all the names mean.’ And this letter came with a huge document. But the writer wanted me to tell him what the one name means that he hadn’t figured out yet. ‘Can you help me out?’ he was asking, and I didn’t have the heart to tell him I made all this stuff up!”

BREAKING THE NEWS

Speaking of making stuff up, the high-level campaigns had a neat way of keeping track of what all the player characters were up to. Peter Adkison created and published an in-game newspaper called the *Kordavan Informant*, (A.K.A. the *K.I.*, which still exists to this day).

This paper newsletter would come out on a Friday afternoon and included prominent things that had happened in the D&D campaigns, as well as in-world advertising for items such as weapons, armor, and potions. Peter even wrote a program to simulate a fantasy stock market, allowing characters to invest the money they earned adventuring and get a return based on the market. The system was so sophisticated that a player once invested in mercenary guilds and then started a war in order to reap the rewards.

Unfortunately, the *Kordavan Informant* included all the news that was fit to print—and some of it that wasn't!



“We’d all be sitting around reading it, we couldn’t wait,” Steve says. “And inevitably somebody would shout, ‘Oh my God, what’s this? This is so wrong!’ As much as the players loved seeing their adventures and exploits in print, they’d often get upset if the information was incorrect.”

“Just recently Steve asked me, ‘How did the newspaper know what our characters did?’ And I just assumed all the henchmen jabbered. They’d visit bars and talk about what their lords and ladies and

masters and mistresses had been up to. But it was also fun to get it wrong to annoy the players—I’d write an article about a character named Mace Lavian and mistakenly call him Miss Lavian,” Peter admits.

“One player was so annoyed that his demigod character kidnapped Maurko Hamalgrar, the Editor of the *Kordavan Informant*. Andevenor walks into the *K.I.* offices and grabs Maurko, pops out, and then says, ‘I’ve stuck him on a pocket plane and if you want him back, I want a retraction!’”

Those with a firm belief in karma might suggest that Peter would eventually reap what he had sowed in the pages of the *Kordavan Informant*. And the creation of the *Legends* set for *Magic: The Gathering* saw him fall victim to some particularly harsh fake news of his own.

“Alchor was my higher-level wizard character and one of the cards in the *Legends* set was supposed to be Alchor’s Tome. At some point during the development and editing process it got renamed, probably by accident, to **Alchor’s Tomb**,” Peter says.

“Peter asked me, is Alchor dead?” Steve remembers. “When I moved in 2020, I found the original playtest cards for the *Legends* set. And on that card, it says Alchor’s Tome. I’m saying it wasn’t me who misspelt it!”

“He’s never been the best speller. All these years I accused him of doing it!” Peter says with a chuckle.

Magic: The Gathering – Adventures in the Forgotten Realms releases digitally on July 8, with a full tabletop release on July 23, 2021.

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Magic: The Gathering - Adventures in the Forgotten Realms

James Wyatt and Jules Robins plot the creation of a Magic set that's been decades in its conception.

Some things were meant to be together. Like peanut butter and jelly, thunder and lightning, and **Max Dunbar and Adam Lee**, the rich fantasy worlds of Dungeons & Dragons and *Magic: The Gathering* have been fated to collide since their earliest days.

As Peter Adkison and Steve Conard were happy to share on the previous page, the unofficial connections between *Magic: The Gathering* and D&D date back to *MTG*'s early origins. And the debates about creating more official ties between the two franchises have also been taking place for decades. James Wyatt, who has crossed back and forth between D&D and *Magic: The Gathering* multiple times during his career at Wizards of the Coast, remembers an early opportunity for the beasts of Dominaria to walk Faerûn's streets.

"When I first started working at Wizards in 2000 there was talk of creating a Dominaria bestiary for third edition Dungeons & Dragons, so the conversations have been happening for a very long time," he recalls.

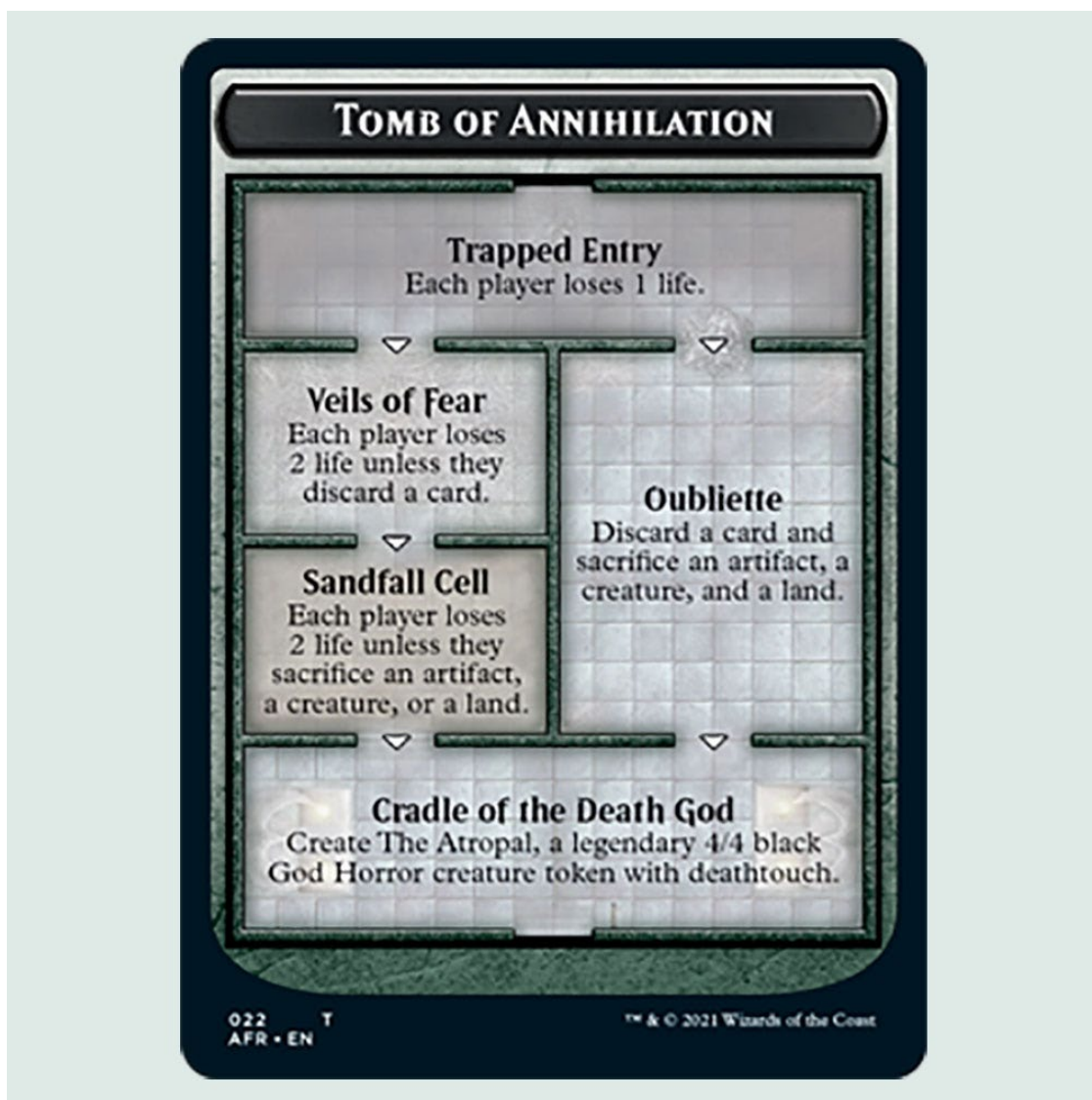
With a foot in both camps, James was in a unique position to help bring the two worlds together, establishing the first of *Magic*'s settings in the D&D multiverse. And he did it in his spare time.

"When I moved from the D&D team to work with the *Magic: The Gathering* team in 2014, I was working on the *Battle for Zendikar* card set and also helping to produce the *Zendikar* art book that was published by Viz Media. As a side project of my own, I wrote a D&D conversion for *Zendikar* that treated it as a campaign setting. We took that to the team upstairs and walked it around the building and we

couldn't find anyone to say 'No' to our request to publish that online as a free PDF. [Still available [here](#), with a direct download [here](#)]

“For the longest time, it had been an accepted fact that we don't ‘cross the streams’ of *Magic* and D&D. But from that moment the mood shifted and it was possible to start down that path. Sharing those PDFs online made fans believe that a *Magic* set featuring Dungeons & Dragons content was on our schedule. It was always a logical conclusion, even if it's taken a while.”

Fans of both games may have been clamoring for an official crossover between *Magic* and D&D but James was under no illusion about the challenges of creating a full set of spell, artifact, creature and land cards.



“The difference in scale between those two things is extraordinary,”

James acknowledges, having worked as the Creative Lead for *Adventures in the Forgotten Realms* before taking up his current post as Senior Designer at Dungeons & Dragons. “There’s no comparison between me sitting on my couch in the evening, typing up a Plane Shift PDF and fleshing it out using existing art from the *Magic* set, versus someone designing a *Magic* set from scratch.”

“One of the very first conversations we had creating *Adventures in the Forgotten Realms* was to ask, ‘Who are we making this for?’” adds Jules Robins, Senior Game Designer on *Magic: The Gathering* and the Set Design Lead for *Adventures in the Forgotten Realms*.

“The desires of D&D players can be very different. A player who’s been onboard since second edition D&D and has also been playing *Magic: The Gathering* since 2002 has different needs to a D&D player who first dipped their toe into fifth edition and has never played *Magic*. It was important to balance those varying demands and figure out what do each of these groups need to be happy and how can we make all of that work together? And that became an ongoing conversation as this set began to take shape.”

THE DNA OF D&D

Another important boundary defining conversation asked the question: Which characters, settings, creatures, and spells are so core to D&D that they have to be included?

“How many whiteboards did we fill with that list?” James asks with a laugh, before Jules adds. “It was a big list to whittle down. Of course, it isn’t a D&D set without a beholder! Certainly, all of the standard classes need their time in the spotlight, so you’ll see creatures that are adventurers of every class. And while it might not seem like a flashy option, a tavern or innkeeper appears in almost every D&D game that’s ever been played, so we really needed to include one.”

Two elements that were always going to be included in a Dungeons & Dragons *MTG* set are, handily, namechecked in the hobby itself.

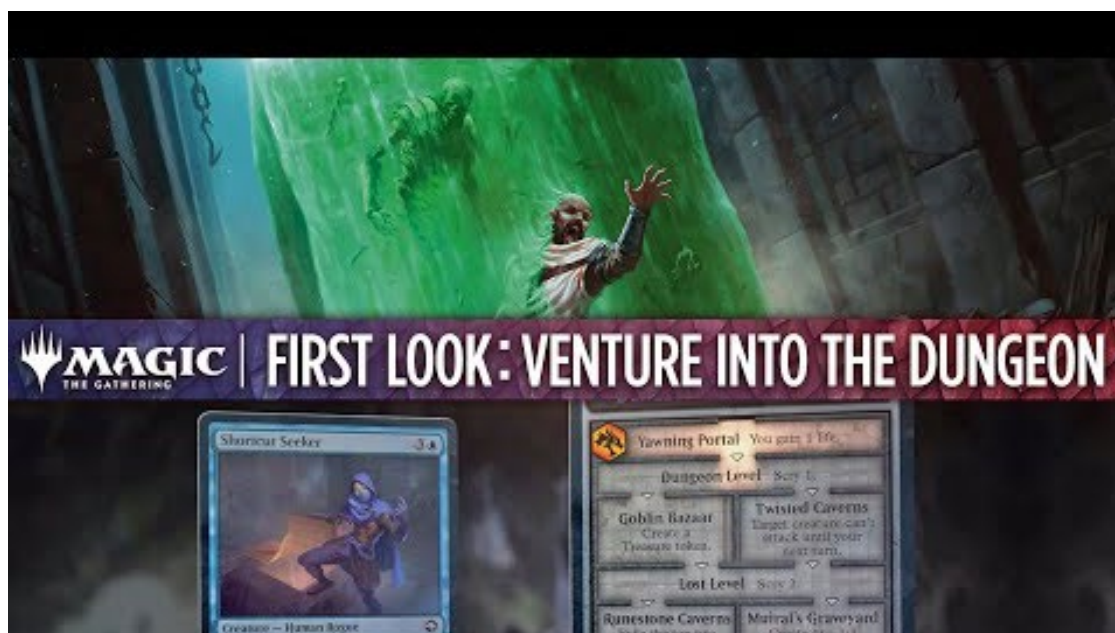
“We’ve got your dungeons, we’ve got your dragons,” James confirms, noting that the chromatic dragons in D&D just happen to line up with the same five colors as *Magic: The Gathering*’s mana.

Certain effects did need a little clarification, however, as Jules notes that some of the dragon's abilities didn't always match their mana color: "We didn't want to suggest that the green dragon's poison breath belongs more on a black card than a green card, for example."



Dragons accounted for, *Adventures in the Forgotten Realms* also allows for a dip into three classic dungeons. Token cards included in the set capture the journeys that can be taken through the Lost Mine of Phandelver, the Tomb of Annihilation, and Undermountain.

"Certain cards will instruct you to venture into a dungeon, which means if you're not already in one, you pick one of those three cards and put a venture marker in the first room. If you've already entered a dungeon, any further cards that tell you to venture there let you move the marker down the card and through one of the doors to enter a new room," Jules explains. "Each room has an effect that activates when you step into it."



“I like the fact that the player is making choices as they plot their own path through the dungeon,” James says. “The decisions they make early on will steer them to one side of the dungeon or the other, and will affect the choices that they’re offered later on.”

SPELL CASTING

Another key element of any D&D game are the spells being slung by the more magical members of the party. *Magic: The Gathering* card sets break down into creatures, spells, enchantments, and artifacts, but more than half of the cards in any set are usually made up of creatures. With such an enormous list of spells to draw from, there was plenty more work for those white board erasers to carry out as that number was whittled down.

“We needed to figure out which spells resonate with players. For example, we knew that *magic missile* had to appear in this set in one way or another. An added challenge that we faced was that a lot of early *Magic* cards had already created spells that are traditionally associated with D&D. Many of those ended up being quite powerful and might not be cards that we’d want to put back into standard circulation,” Jules says, as James agrees. “Animate Dead is a wacky card in *Magic*!”

To embed as much D&D lore into

Adventures in the Forgotten Realms as possible, the card creators had to roll for Stealth. *Magic* cards often use ability words that are thematic to a set, such as Landfall, Magecraft, and Raid, but the set designers managed to increase the number of spell names in the D&D set by using them to describe other abilities.

“A lot of the creature cards feature abilities and we were able to sneakily put the name of a spell on there to describe what’s happening. For example, we have a paladin ability that’s described on the card using the fifth edition spell name *beacon of hope*,” James says. “The same method has been used to include more class abilities. The D&D monk ability Stunning Strike translates to allow our monk to tap a creature after you attack with it. It’s another way to call back and add those evocative names.”



LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Installing spell names and class abilities wasn’t the only way the production team were able to inject more D&D flavor into the *Magic: The Gathering* set. Faerûn’s storied history includes an incredible cast of characters to choose from and a number of the more high-profile names were sure to make into the set. But how easy is it to take a legendary D&D character such as Drizzt Do’Urden and boil his abilities and artifacts down to the text on a *Magic: The Gathering* card?



“You have to try and get to the very core of the character and that’s a huge challenge,” Jules admits. “Not only does a player need to recognize this character so the card feels spot on, you also need to account for what made people fall in love with the character in the first place.

“And that’s before you look at the card’s mechanics. A large part of the design team’s job is trying to find the coolest execution. In the example of Drizzt, it was difficult to capture everything about his scimitars, *Icingdeath* and *Twinkle*, but it was easy to create a nod to their abilities by including the double strike mechanic on Drizzt’s card.”

Tiamat—head of the Avernus Residents Association, ’80s animation star, and five-headed progenitor of all chromatic dragons—had to undergo a similar editing process to fit all of her exceptional qualities on a single *MTG* card.

“There are so many aspects to Tiamat,” Jules says. “Are players thinking about the version of Tiamat from D&D adventure *Tyranny of Dragons*? Or are they thinking back to her appearance in the classic ’80s cartoon? Our company is full of people who are huge D&D fans so we created a bunch of different iterations for Tiamat and put them in front of those über fans to see what made their eyes

go wide. And that's how the final Tiamat card came to be.”

Magic: The Gathering – Adventures in the Forgotten Realms is released for *Magic Online* and *MTG Arena* on July 8, 2021. Prerelease events for the physical cards begin on July 16, ahead of their official on-sale date of July 23, 2021. Visit the ***Magic: The Gathering website*** to see all the card previews for *Adventures in the Forgotten Realms*.



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Magic: The Gathering - Saturday Morning D&D Secret Lair Drop

Artist Tyler Walpole cranks the nostalgia up to 11 with a flashback to the classic '80s fantasy cartoon.

“Hey look! A Dungeons & Dragons ride.”

Before the internet gave us on-demand content and bingeable boxsets, Saturday morning cartoons cast their spell to draw a monster audience of kids. And from 1983 to 1985 CBS’s Dungeons & Dragons cartoon, which began with those immortal words above, took us on a rollercoaster ride that dumped us in a fantasy world and turned every kid watching into acrobats, barbarians, cavaliers, rangers, magicians, and pre-rogue thieves.

As D&D prepares to make its official mark on *Magic: The Gathering* with the launch of *Adventures in the Forgotten Realms*, the question on every *Magic* connoisseurs’ lips is: will there be a Dungeons & Dragons *Secret Lair* drop?

“Usually, it’s the cards that look the coolest visually that make the best *Secret Lair* drops. It’s those cards you can instantly tell people are going to love, such as the Bob Ross basic lands that used real art created by him, and the Godzilla basic lands that had the King of Monsters pictured wandering through them,” says Chris Gleeson, Associate Brand Manager, Marketing for *Magic: The Gathering*.



“The drops our community has been the most excited for are *Magic* cards that don’t look like they came from any random pack. When players see an opponent play a card from the Party Hard, Shred Harder drop, where each card looks like a poster for a metal band, you know it’ll make them ask, ‘What is that?’ And that’s when you get people really excited.”

Dungeons & Dragons isn’t short of a gorgeous piece of art or two. But the first D&D *Secret Lair* drop pulls from something special to add to the excitement of the *Adventures in the Forgotten Realms* set. With fan-favorite zombie-slayers from *The Walking Dead* having already appeared in a drop, there was precedent for other TV characters to join the fun. That’s how the iconic, primary color images of Hank, Diana, Eric, Sheila, Albert, Bobby, Uni, and Venger come to find themselves on cards showcasing the beloved Dungeons & Dragons cartoon!

The six exclusive *Magic: The Gathering* cards included in this *Secret Lair* drop are spells, including two enchantments. All of the main characters from the D&D cartoon are featured: Commander's Sphere aptly puts the Dungeon Master himself center stage; Whir of Invention includes great flavor text from Albert (better known as Presto); Impact Tremors sees barbarian Bobby smashing the ground as Hank and Sheila flank him; Unbreakable Formation has Diana providing protection as Eric raises his shield; and Hero's Downfall has Venger watching our young heroes ("Uni appears in the barbarian's arms inside the scrying sphere," Chris points out).



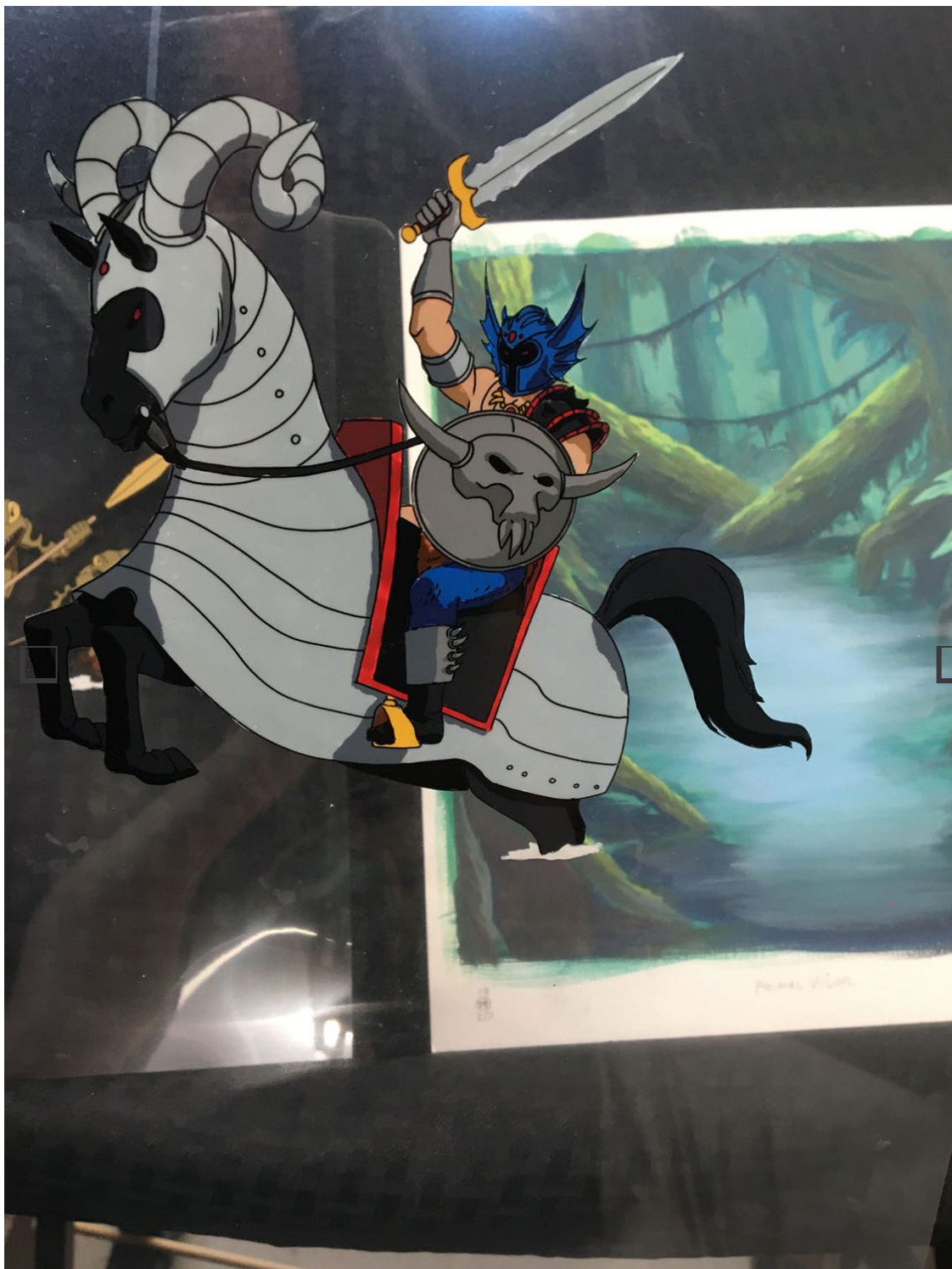
The sixth card also throws a fan-favorite villain in for good measure. Primal Vigor features human fighter Warduke, sword raised as he sits atop his impressive mount, leading a platoon of bullywugs.

"When art director Tom Jenkot contacted me about the project, my

immediate response was, ‘Do we get to do Venger? Do we get to do Warduke? As a fan of ’80s cartoons I’ve always been attracted to the bad guys, as they often felt cooler than the good guys,” artist Tyler Walpole tells *Dragon+*.

“Venger is wonderfully charismatic. And it’s great that he’s terrified of Tiamat—here’s this big bad guy, who’s scared of this bigger, badder villain! And I always remember the painting of Warduke that Wayne Reynolds did for *Dungeon* magazine [Issue #105, December 2003]. The character was so cool.”

If it looks like the images from the Saturday Morning D&D *Secret Lair* drop are pulled directly from the cartoon, that’s down to Tyler’s skill. In an attempt to get as close as possible to that distinct cartoon style, the artist worked to mimic the lithographic cel animation effect that created it.



“I decided that if we’re going to go for this retro look, we should really go for it. I used digital inks to print on the surface as my inking by hand wasn’t working as well. Then I painted acrylics on the backs of those to create the look for each cel. Much like the old cartoons, sometimes the scenes required layers of characters,” Tyler explains.

The All-Natural, Totally Refreshing Superdrop

The Saturday Morning D&D cards are part of a bundle of *Secret Lair* drops that can be purchased together. This All-Natural, Totally Refreshing superdrop can be preordered on the *Secret Lair website* and is available from 9am PT June 21-9am PT July 23, 2021. Miss a drop and it's gone forever!

“The painted backgrounds are gouache. The process of painting on the back of an image is hard to wrap your head around, because you're working from front to back. You create the shadows first, then add the primary colors, and then the other layers. Initially you're looking at globs of paint that don't really make any sense.

“I don't know how anything ever got animated because it took me hours and hours to create just one of these images. It's a long process, but when you flip it over and it all comes together, it feels like magic.”

The *Saturday Morning D&D Secret Lair* drop includes six physical cards and is available in foil (\$39.99/€44.99/£39.99) and non-foil (\$29.99/€34.99/£29.99) versions. It's on sale from 9am PT June 21 until 9am PT July 23, 2021.

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Magic: The Gathering - Using Magic Cards in D&D

If you're looking for inspiration not perspiration or you just want to add flavor to your D&D campaign, a set of Magic cards has you covered.



Long before James Wyatt wrote the *first official Plane Shift supplement* and brought Dungeons & Dragons crashing into the world of *Magic: The Gathering*, players were gleefully mashing both games up. With many gaming groups alternating between playing D&D and *MTG*, *Magic* cards were inevitably scattered around the table next to miniatures and rulebooks. It was an obvious step for DMs to grab a handful and incorporate them into the game.

“The identities of *Magic* and D&D are both ensconced firmly in the heroic fantasy space, so they naturally fit each other well. There’s plenty of inspiration through the story, setting, art, and flavor text on the cards, while still leaving room for a Dungeon Master to get creative,” says Chris Tulach, Product Manager for D&D Play.

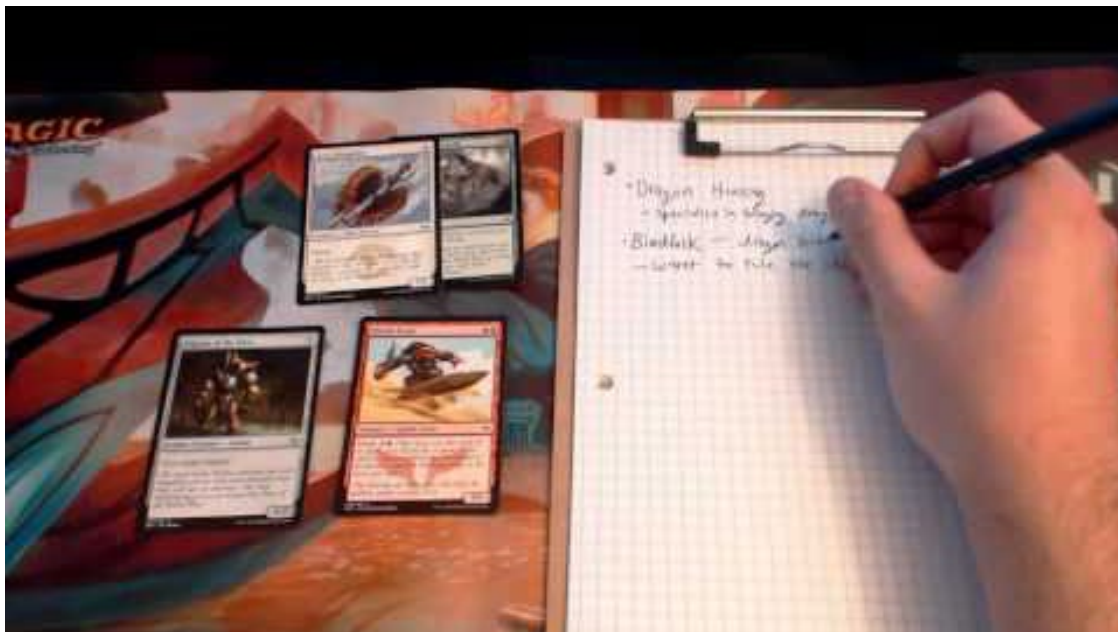
Below we showcase a few different ways that *Magic: The Gathering* cards can be used to influence your D&D game. With a whole set of Dungeons & Dragons-themed cards available soon in *Adventures in the Forgotten Realms*, there’s never been a better time to add a little

Magic to your roleplaying.

INSTANT INSPIRATION

Each *Magic: The Gathering* card is a convenient package of inspiration coalesced into a single piece of paper that includes a name, mechanics, flavor text, and art. Streamer Matt Click from *aFistfulofDice* reveals a fun way for Dungeon Masters to prep for a D&D session using an unopened pack of *Magic* cards.

Matt shows off his creative process as he breaks open a random booster pack. Initially, he allows himself to be led by any art that catches his attention and puts those cards aside. He then turns a Pilgrim of the Fires golem, the instant spell Return to Earth, a Mardu Scout goblin, and the flying creature Aven Skirmisher into a dragon hunt to remember. And if the party completes its mission, maybe they'll find that deactivated golem in the dragon's hoard.



BUILDING ENCOUNTERS

If you want to expand beyond the opportunities a single booster pack provides, you can pull from a full *Magic: The Gathering* set of cards. Kat Kruger and Chris Tulach curated a set of cards to help inspire them when they were writing the D&D adventure *X Marks the Spot*,

soaking up their combination of art and inspiration text.

“My first step was to go through all the cards in the set and look for ones that I thought would work well as locations, NPCs, and creatures for a D&D adventure,” Kat remembers. “Chris and I went in with the idea that a prison escape and treasure hunt would be the overarching storyline so that helped when choosing the cards. Every so often as the writing progressed, I’d look back through the cards for further inspiration.”

“Often the flavor text would spark an idea. The best example of that is Arguel’s Blood Fast, which transforms into the Temple of Aclazotz. The card’s flavor text reads, ‘Arguel’s vision led him into the jungles of Ixalan... to the lost temple of a bat-god of night, eternal enemy to the Threefold Sun.’ Everything else fell into place based on that text. I was able to draw inspiration for the quest item, its location in the adventure, an NPC, and the final boss battle,” Kat says.

The flavor text on a *Magic* card can be a powerful driver of creativity, and the *Adventures in the Forgotten Realms* set includes it in a new place.

“I’m very excited for this set because it’s the first time we’ve added flavor text to basic land cards. These brilliant additions on one of the most basic parts of the game suddenly turn them into great storytelling devices as you play a land every turn,” says Jules Robins, as James Wyatt adds, “I’ve already made myself a little pack of basic lands to use as adventure hook generators.”

PICK A CARD, ANY CARD

One of the benefits of having a set of cards so steeped in fantasy lore is that you can hand the physical items to your players without breaking the immersion at the table. For example, what better way to decide which magic item is hidden somewhere in that massive treasure hoard than by having the players pick it from a fanned-out selection? It’s a feature designer Kat Kruger included in the *Plane Shift: Ixalan* adventure *X Marks the Spot*, allowing DMs to collect the corresponding *Magic: The Gathering* cards from the *Ixalan* set and have players draw them when they gained an item listed on the

“Hidden Plunder” appendix.

However, DMs may want to limit the available choices so as not to risk breaking their game. Pulling a random card from an entire set is the equivalent of rolling on the world’s most terrifying Random Encounter Table.

“You can curate that selection of cards to be eight creatures that make up a set of random encounters a third-level party can handle. That way, if I need a monster for them to fight, I’m not pulling a card so randomly that they end up encountering Niv-Mizzet!” says James Wyatt, who uses *Magic* cards to inspire his Ravnica D&D campaign. “I group these cards by category—if I need an NPC for the players to encounter, I’ll pull out a character card. You meet this person and they look like this, and the flavor text on their card might inspire how I roleplay that character.”

It appears there are two camps when it comes to those who prefer to roll a die and those who are happy to pull a card, based on the perceived random nature of those events.

“D&D uses tables for this sort of thing all the time. But there’s an interesting philosophical difference between random selection from a table versus random selection using a deck of cards, even though the result is basically the same,” says James Wyatt.

“Drawing cards randomly instead of rolling for an item has a visceral element to it and is a fun way to create engagement in the adventure,” adds Chris Tulach. “D&D groups that used *Magic* cards also found it helps with visualization since the art immerses players in the game.”

SINGLE-USE SCROLLS

Dragon+ editor Bart Carroll recommends another way to incorporate *Magic: The Gathering* cards into D&D. His *Behind the Screens* article details how a card could be carried around as a single-use scroll that is cast when a player flips it onto the table.

Spell effects are determined at the DMs discretion—the higher the card’s cost and rarity, the more powerful the effect. Many spells are self-evident: the Lightning Bolt card casts the D&D spell of the same

name; a creature card works like a summon monster spell; an artifact introduces that item (or the item's effect) into the game.

The most interesting rule in this system from the DMs point of view is that players and monsters in Bart's game had equal access to these cards!

Magic: The Gathering – Adventures in the Forgotten Realms is released for *Magic Online* and *MTG Arena* on July 8, 2021. Prerelease events for the physical cards begin on July 16, ahead of their official on-sale date of July 23, 2021. Visit the ***Magic: The Gathering website*** to see all the card previews for *Adventures in the Forgotten Realms*.



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Character Spotlight: NPCs

Legendary Magic: The Gathering Planeswalker

Dakkon Shadow Slayer joins fifth edition D&D!

We're huge fans of the **major new collaborative series** that brings together the talents of artist Max Dunbar and writer/editor Adam Lee here at *Dragon+*. If you thought the pair would struggle to top an NPC nightwalker called Malthraxis who has close ties to the undead monks in the Monastery of Shadows, you needn't have worried. With all the chatter this issue about *Magic: The Gathering*, we gave our dynamic duo the opportunity to reimagine a true icon (currently available in ***Modern Horizons 2***) and bring Dakkon Shadow Slayer into fifth edition D&D for the first time!

"Adam and I were interested in putting our own spin on Dakkon," Max explains. "Characters like him are mythic, larger than life, world-breaking individuals so I wanted to create him in a physically larger format than we had used for the previous NPCs. My final version of art bringing this legendary character to life is huge."

Anti-paladin Dakkon was plucked from *MTG Legends* designer Robin Herbert's D&D campaign. Dakkon was a major villain in Robin's world and regularly made life difficult for characters as one of the "heavies" (read more about ***Magic's D&D origins* here**). Max's version of the character paid particular attention to Dakkon Shadow Slayer's armor, featuring a dragon head on the helmet and the shield, and both Adam and Max thought it would be appropriate if he had a similar creature as a mount.

"The reason wyverns look so cool is that they typically have two back legs and their two arms are incorporated into their wings. I've always liked them as creatures so I wanted Dakkon to have one," Max fanboys. "And Adam is such a good collaborator because he'll take that idea and decide that part of Dakkon's armor summons or controls that wyvern. It's a very pure collaboration and it doesn't get any more instructional than that between us."

Check out Adam and Max's previous collaboration for *Dragon+*, which features **an undead order of shadow monks that's here to destroy—or save!—the world.**

[DOWNLOAD Dakkon Shadow Slayer](#)



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DAKKON, SHADOW SLAYER

Dakkon was once a gifted blacksmith who some say had sold his soul for his uncanny ability to shape steel. Many in his village would hear him working at night as he chanted unknown litanies to the fire and steel. They say the litanies were taught to him by the fire, turning his forge into a portal so that he could bring forth a being of shadow—a master—to teach him the art of steel. Many nights a plume of red-hot embers crackled into the darkness as his hammer rang to the incessant gasping of the bellows. Some who spied on him as he worked swore that they saw a shadow appear from within the forge and slide up the glowing steel, entering the veins that bulged on his powerful arm.

As his clientele grew, Dakkon became less and less aware of those who peered into his smithy. They were gawkers and mere strewers of tales about town, chickens who clucked and kicked the dirt with nothing better to do. He was more focused on the voice in his head. A voice that sounded like a silver wind and the swelling sigh of the incoming tide. It told him how hot the forge should be, what metals to mix together, and where to strike the steel. The voice spoke in words and images; it showed him beautiful shapes and revealed complex secrets of the steel. Then the voice mentioned Shadow Slayer. It gave Dakkon a glimpse of a sword beyond the skill of any mortal master, a sword that longed to be alive. As the painter might dream that their work could walk off the canvas, so this voice spoke to Dakkon of Shadow Slayer, infusing his mind with inspiration and desire to make a sword of legend.

As Dakkon labored harder and harder, increasing his prowess so that he could one day attempt Shadow Slayer, the voice began to shift its way of speaking. It was now as if Shadow Slayer itself was speaking to him, giving him instructions on how it wished itself to be made. As Dakkon followed the voice, the more his skill progressed and the more secrets it divulged. He learned how to fold and forge spectral symbols into the steel to suffuse his work with magic. Under the guidance of the voice, he fashioned armor—a shield, a helm, and pauldrons—all of which would imbue his body with the unearthly power needed to wield Shadow Slayer.

With the armor complete, he followed instructions to prepare the forge to birth his final masterpiece. By this time, he was no more than a mortal shell, his body wasted away by neglect. Without any conscious understanding, guided by Shadow Slayer, he inscribed demonic sigils into the interior of the forge and over his body. When he did, he could feel arcane forces flood into his limbs, instilling them with enough energy to continue. On some level, he knew the energy from the sigils also bound him to the forge and would destroy what remained of his body, but the drive to complete Shadow Slayer was too great. He had come too far to



turn back. To withstand the final process, he donned the armor and drew on its magic, and began to heat the steel. With each blow of his hammer, Dakkon could feel a part of his soul being consumed by Shadow Slayer. He could feel its hunger; the blade was starving for life and Dakkon suddenly became aware of the pulsing energy of the village and its inhabitants as he pulled Shadow Slayer from the fire. He left the forge, Shadow Slayer still glowing, and went into the village to quench its hunger.

DAKKON AND SHADOW SLAYER

Dakkon and Shadow Slayer are entangled in a cursed dance. Shadow Slayer needs Dakkon so it can access the Material Plane and reap a harvest of souls. Dakkon needs his armor to sustain his life so that he may wield the power of Shadow Slayer. Very little of the original Dakkon remains, but what does cling to sanity with an iron grip. Although it fills his body with power enough to wield Shadow Slayer, his armor is essentially a prison, for should he remove it, Dakkon would skeletonize and turn to dust in a matter of seconds.

When Shadow Slayer needs souls, it becomes the dominant persona until its otherworldly hunger is slaked. In these moments, Dakkon must hunt. Where once a lowly commoner would satisfy Shadow Slayer's thirst, now only the most powerful souls will suffice, forcing Dakkon to track down ever more dangerous prey. Once it is satiated with souls, Shadow Slayer's influence lessens and Dakkon has more control over himself. Although, as time has gone on, one could say that differentiating between the two is becoming harder and harder.

EPIC LEVEL ITEMS

Caveat emptor!

Dakkon is meant to be a quest giver or a terrible threat monster to lower level characters and his items remain with him. Only epic level characters should even dream of trying to get some of Dakkon's items—and DMs should consider each item carefully within the context of their campaign. A way of avoiding an overpowered character is to have Dakkon's items be annihilated or become depowered when they are separated from their master.

Epic level items should be handled with care. Allowing a character access to the full suit of Ur-Armor can tilt the power level in a campaign; DMs are advised to tread carefully and make sure all suitable countermeasures are considered when giving over a single one of these items.

Now enjoy some epic items!

DAKKON'S ITEMS

Dakkon has forged his own arsenal of powerful magic items.

WYVERN SHIELD

Dakkon's Wyvern Shield works like a *figurine of wondrous power* that contains **Razharak**, an elder wyvern (see stat block for Razharak below). Whoever attunes to the shield becomes the new master of Razarak. Razharak can materialize for up to 24 hours or until she is reduced to 0 hit points. Once it has been used, the shield can't be used again until 2 days have passed. As a magic item, it is a *shield +3*.

UR-ARMOR

The secrets of creating the Ur-Armor were given to Dakkon by the evil entity that inhabits Shadow Slayer. Donning and attuning to the armor provides the wearer the power and protection to wield Shadow Slayer, otherwise any attempt to attune would instantly result in Shadow Slayer consuming their soul.

Once the armor is donned, it takes over as the source of life force for its wearer. If the armor is removed, the wearer's drained body cannot support itself and turns to dust. Only three *wish* spells cast in unison can reverse this effect of the Ur-Armor.

The Ur-Armor as a whole is a suit of *plate mail +3* and each individual piece also provides the following properties:

Helm. Wearing the helm grants darkvision 120 ft. and covers the wearer's eyes in a shroud of darkness that cannot be dispelled by magic. It also allows the wearer to speak and understand Infernal.

Pauldrons. Wearing the pauldrons allow the wearer to speak Draconic and grants the wearer immunity from fire. The faces on the pauldrons animate from time to time to grimace and snarl.

Breastplate. The armor allows the wearer to regenerate 20 hit points at the beginning of the wearer's turn as long as they have 1 hit point.

Belt. The belt contains an *onyx eye*, a magic gemstone, which is set into the buckle. This onyx eye grants the wearer the boon of immortality (see Epic Boons in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

Vambraces. The left vambrace of the Ur-Armor has two *onyx eyes* that imbue damage dealt by the wearer with Abyssal energy, dealing double damage to Celestial creatures.

Greaves. The greaves grant the wearer resistance to non-magical damage.

SHADOW SLAYER

Shadow Slayer is an evil entity that has brought itself into being using Dakkon's skills as a blacksmith, and now inhabits the sword known as Shadow Slayer. It is an ancient intellect that understands a type of magic powered by the consumption of souls. If Shadow Slayer isn't fed a steady diet of souls (100 hit points per week), it begins to cause a conflict that can result in Shadow Slayer consuming the soul of its wielder.

Every morning Shadow Slayer's persona attempts to supplant the wielder's. The wielder must make a DC 20 Charisma save or be taken over by Shadow Slayer's will for 12 hours or until Shadow Slayer's 100 hit point soul requirement is fulfilled.

Anyone wielding Shadow Slayer gains +3 to attack and damage rolls. It has the following additional properties:

Psychic Intensity. While holding Shadow Slayer, you can't be charmed or frightened.

Consume Soul. When Shadow Slayer reduces a creature to 0 hit points, it consumes its soul (if it has one). That creature can only be restored to life by a wish spell.

Soul Sense. While holding Shadow Slayer, the wielder can sense the direction of the nearest soul within 300 yards and feels a growing hunger the closer they get to it.

Necrotic Bolt. Shadow Slayer can discharge a bolt of necrotic energy which does 16 (3d8 + 3) necrotic damage.

USING DAKKON IN YOUR GAME

There's one main question to answer in order to unlock the mystery of Dakkon: Is he in accord with Shadow Slayer, is he locked in conflict with it, or is he the master of it? Here are some related questions to ponder:

- Is Dakkon just a death dealer, bent solely on harvesting souls for Shadow Slayer, or is there still humanity left that is looking for a way out of this curse?
- Has Dakkon become a mouthpiece for Shadow Slayer, his body and mind now a puppet for its ancient intellect or does he now enjoy his existence, wielding the power of Shadow Slayer to achieve his own goals?
- What does Shadow Slayer want other than more souls?
- Is there an endgame that Dakkon and Shadow Slayer are seeking together or are their ends separate and in conflict with one another?

Here's one story possibility:

CURSE OF SHADOW SLAYER

In this scenario, Dakkon, in a moment of lucidity, wishes for the end to his cursed existence. He has caused so much bloodshed and pain that he longs only for the end. But Shadow Slayer is no fool and is slowly taking over the tiring Dakkon, grinding him down and crushing his will. He's desperate; there may only be one last chance before he is subsumed entirely under the might of Shadow Slayer. He reaches out to the party, believing that they are the ones who can free him from his prison of torment. Dakkon knows of the "kill switch" for Shadow Slayer, but it's a quest that is not to be taken lightly.

From here, you can make the quest to release Dakkon as hard or as easy as you'd like. It could be that the solution to ending Shadow Slayer's hold on Dakkon is on another plane, which opens up the whole multiverse to your adventure. If the journey takes the characters into Celestial and Abyssal realms, Dakkon might be willing to pry out two of the *onyx* eyes from his armor. As they bounce from plane to plane, Dakkon becomes a hub for the adventurers to return to after they have completed their missions. You can have fun switching personas for Dakkon—one time he is himself but the next time the adventurers might encounter Shadow Slayer. This makes for a dangerous game, especially if your adventurers are not epic level. One slip and they could be found out, making their souls an easy banquet for Shadow Slayer.

At the end of the quest, the adventurers have a choice—allow Dakkon to end Shadow Slayer's curse and be freed from his torment or try to steal Shadow Slayer and the Ur-Armor. Be sure to have a moment where Shadow Slayer appeals to one of the characters—it chooses the one most tempted by its power—and tries to make a deal with them. If Dakkon breaks the curse, Shadow Slayer shatters—its essence banished to the Abyss—and Dakkon turns to dust.

DAKKON, SHADOW SLAYER

Medium Humanoid (Human)

Armor Class 21 (Magic Armor)

Hit Points 256 (27d8 + 135)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23 (+6)	21 (+5)	20 (+5)	17 (+3)	22 (+6)	21 (+5)

Saving Throws Str +13, Dex +12, Con +12

Skills Athletics +13, Intimidation +12, Perception +13

Damage Resistances necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities poison, fire

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 23

Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Infernal

Challenge 22 (41,000 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +7

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If Dakkon fails a saving throw, he can choose to succeed instead.

Planeswalker. Dakkon can use an action to cast the *plane shift* spell (no spell slot or components required), targeting himself only, and travel to the chosen plane, or from that plane back to the Material Plane. Once he uses this boon, he can't use it again until he finishes a short rest.

Rampage. When Dakkon reduces a creature to 0 hit points with a melee attack on his turn, Dakkon can take a bonus action to move up to half his speed and make a shield bash attack.

Regeneration. Dakkon regains 20 hit points at the start of his turn if he has at least 1 hit point.

Actions

Multiattack. Dakkon makes three attacks with Shadow Slayer.

Shadow Slayer. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +16 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (3d6 + 9) slashing damage, or 22 (3d8 + 9) slashing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack, plus 16 (3d8 + 3) necrotic damage.

Wyvern Shield. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d8 + 6) bludgeoning damage.

Necrotic Bolt. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (3d8 + 3) necrotic damage.

Legendary Actions

Dakkon can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Dakkon regains spent legendary actions at the start of his turn.

Charge. Dakkon moves up to his speed.

Backhand. Dakkon makes a *Wyvern Shield* attack. If the attack hits, the target must succeed on a DC 21 Strength saving throw or be pushed up to 10 feet away and knocked prone.

Feast of Souls (Costs 2 Actions). Dakkon makes a Shadow Slayer attack against each creature within 10 feet of him.

RAZHARAK, DAKKON'S WYVERN

Under the arcane instruction of Shadow Slayer, Dakkon forged the soul of a wyvern into a shield. The wyvern, Razharak, can be summoned from the shield by speaking her name aloud.

RAZHARAK

Large Dragon

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 178 (17d10 + 85)

Speed 20 ft., fly 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	10 (+0)	20 (+5)	5 (-3)	12 (+1)	6 (-2)

Skills Perception +4

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages –

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +4

Actions

Multiattack. Razharak makes two attacks: one with her bite and one with her stinger or tail. While flying, she can use her claws in place of one other attack.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) slashing damage.

Stinger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 14 (3d6 + 4) piercing damage. The target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 24 (7d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 18 (4d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 19 Strength saving throw or be pushed up to 20 feet away and knocked prone.

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Community Poll: Ravenloft Horror Trinkets

Revealing the chilling items littering the Domains of Dread as suggested by D&D players.

Van Richten's Guide to Ravenloft has opened up a whole new world of horror in fifth edition Dungeons & Dragons. From the region's vile, immortal Darklords, to Domains of Dread that'll have you clawing at the mists trying to escape their terrors, it's an intense experience.

Such environments are filled with awful items, as sinister deeds and festering evils take form as physical scars. These might appear as all manner of talismans, mementos, criminal evidence, mysterious devices, cursed relics, and physical impossibilities. These trinkets hint toward various horrific tales and might lead to dreadful revelations—or be nothing more than grim keepsakes.

Page 36 of *Van Richten's Guide to Ravenloft* contains a table of trinkets characters might begin the game with or discover along their journey. A few examples include: a picture you drew as a child of your imaginary friend; a lock that opens when blood is dripped into its keyhole; a flag from a ship lost at sea; and dice made from the knuckles of a notorious charlatan.

We asked you to add to that list and tell us what other horror trinkets might exist within Ravenloft's Domains of Dread. Our sincere thanks to all the contributors, as many of your answers feel like threads that could be pulled upon to help create a whole new adventure.

You can also check out our previous *Community Poll*, detailing the rare and unusual books you might find in a library in celebration of *Candlekeep Mysteries*.

Artist: Mark Mitchell

A set of playing cards painted so that each represents an infamous killer.

Robert C.

The stirrup from a horse that bolted and threw its rider over a cliff.

Paul K.

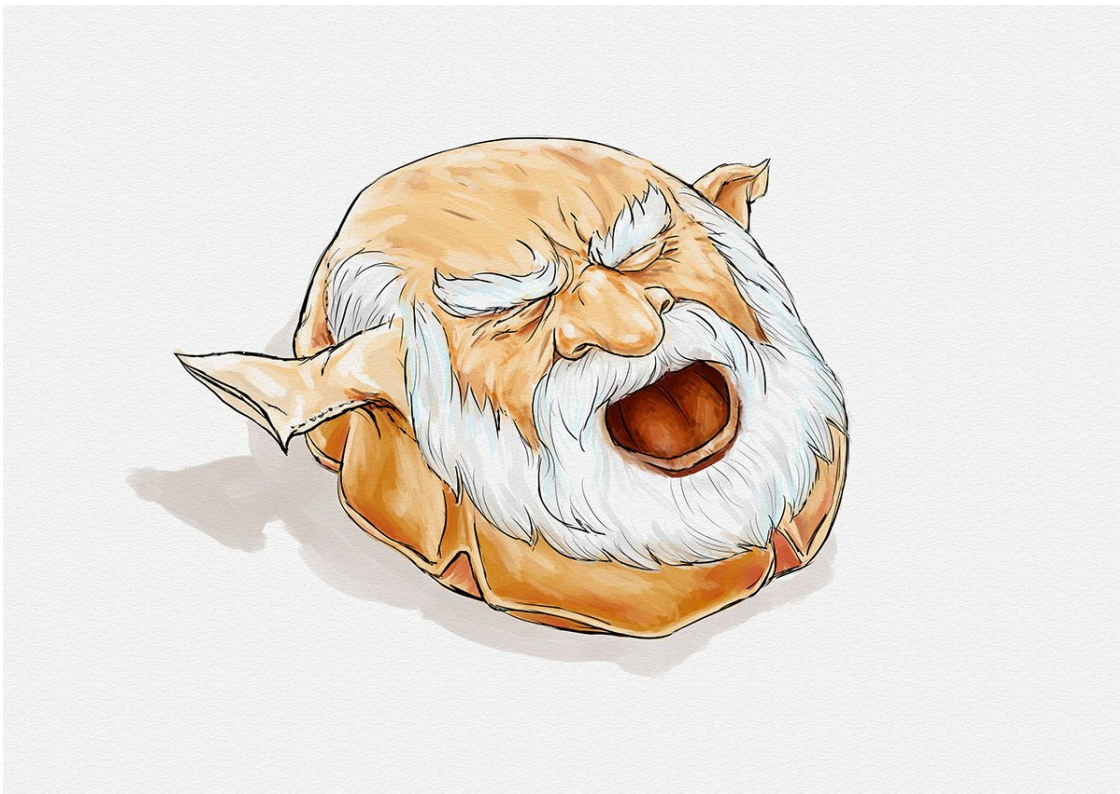
A small pouch, given to a traitor. When you shake the bag, the coins within don't clink together.

Jane D.

A glass cube with an eye in the center, which swivels to look at the owner when—and only when—the owner is not looking at it.

Stuart L.

A gnome-skin whoopee cushion that makes the sound of a gnome being crushed when you sit on it.



Gnome whoopee cushion (tap to view)

Paul K.

The charcoal used by an artist who is currently missing. Their paintings are legendary, but the artist has not been seen since completing their masterpiece.

John D.

A feather that smells vaguely of wine.

Jane D.

A cracked pocket mirror that sometimes shows distorted, foggy faces in its reflection.

Leo G.

A copper coin depicting a humanoid face. The species of the face

shifts every time it is viewed and its expression mirrors the mood of the person holding it.

John D.

A cravat which slowly tightens itself while being worn.

Chris D.

An iron candle holder. Any candle lit when placed in this holder attracts flies, and their buzzing sounds unnervingly distorted around the flame.

Edward O.

The kitchen knife of a dead chef. The knife causes anything it cuts to bleed slightly, including items and creatures that normally don't contain blood.

Nick D.

This ornately carved, wooden box produces cries for help when opened. Sometimes the voice changes, giving the impression that the box is sharing screams that are currently happening, rather than creating the sounds itself.

Stuart L.

A twisting, braided ring with a bronze patina. Close inspection reveals the depiction of three leeches, each latched onto the next.

Robert C.

A single child's shoe made of white silk. Perfect and can never be

blemished or damaged. If placed next to the ear like a sea shell, a faint whispering lullaby is heard. If you listen all the way through, it ends in a shriek.

John D.

The broken hilt of a dagger, which has a wyvern worked into the handle.

Jane D.

A schematic for a weapon that the owner never finished.

Leo G.

The preserved ear of your childhood pet for you to whisper your fears into.

Chris D.

Rope from a guillotine. Its dark stains have a sweet smell that grows stronger during a full moon.

Edward O.

Shackles that only lock if the wearer is guilty; innocent hands slide right out of them.

Nick D.

A seemingly empty glass vial that breathes a sigh of relief when the stopper is removed, as if something unseen has been released.

Dave P.

A nail taken from gallows. When suspended from a thread it rotates like a compass needle to point in the direction of a murderer.

Stuart L.

A scrap of unknown vellum containing an infernal hymn that's damnably catchy.

Robert C.

A sequin shirt that looks beautiful from a distance. Up close it's possible to make out that each sequin is a humanoid fingernail painted silver and sewn into the shirt.



(select to view)

Paul K.

An ornate signet ring with a small needle at the center of its decorative pattern.

Jane D.

An engraved stone tablet believed to have been recovered from the graveyard of an ancient civilization that mysteriously disappeared.

Leo G.

A coin purse with an embroidered spider on the outside. When anyone reaches in for a coin, they feel something furry brush against their fingers.

John D.

A cracked monocle that shows the last thing its owner saw before it was damaged.

Chris D.

A jar supposedly containing three hag eyes, three hag molars, but only two hag fingers. The owner can't remember from where or why they took the jar but they distinctly remember stealing it.

Edward O.

A hand-knit quilt featuring patches that portray the history of a long-lost village.

Nick D.

A perfectly formed blood-red rose that never wilts but smells like rot and decay.

Dave P.

An earring that gives off an eerie whistle when a creature in the dark is watching you.

Kat G.

A vial containing the last breath of a condemned person who was later found to be innocent.

Chris D.

A small music box that some believe to be one of Blinsky's creations. When the lid swings open, it reveals a grinning, swaying scarecrow holding an illuminated skull lantern, as a joyful, discordant cacophony plays!



(Select to view)

Mira M.

A small, thin chess board. Illusory pieces appear if a certain spot is depressed but the owner can only move the white ones. Sometimes when the spot is pressed one of the black pieces has moved.

Stuart L.

A puzzle cube toy for a child who never came home.

Leo G.

An iron ring lined with frowning faces, one of which has an unnerving smile. The words, "May they never need me again" are engraved on the inside.

Edward O.

A beautiful conch shell that screams for its life in the voices of people you love when placed to your ear.

Calypso H.

An acorn that you collected from a graveyard's oak tree when you were young.

Nick D.

A compact mirror that shows the viewer with black, empty sockets where their eyes should be.

Dave P.

An eternally wiggling severed lizard's tail that only goes still when

it's near the same type of creature as the one who severed it.

Lorenzo G.

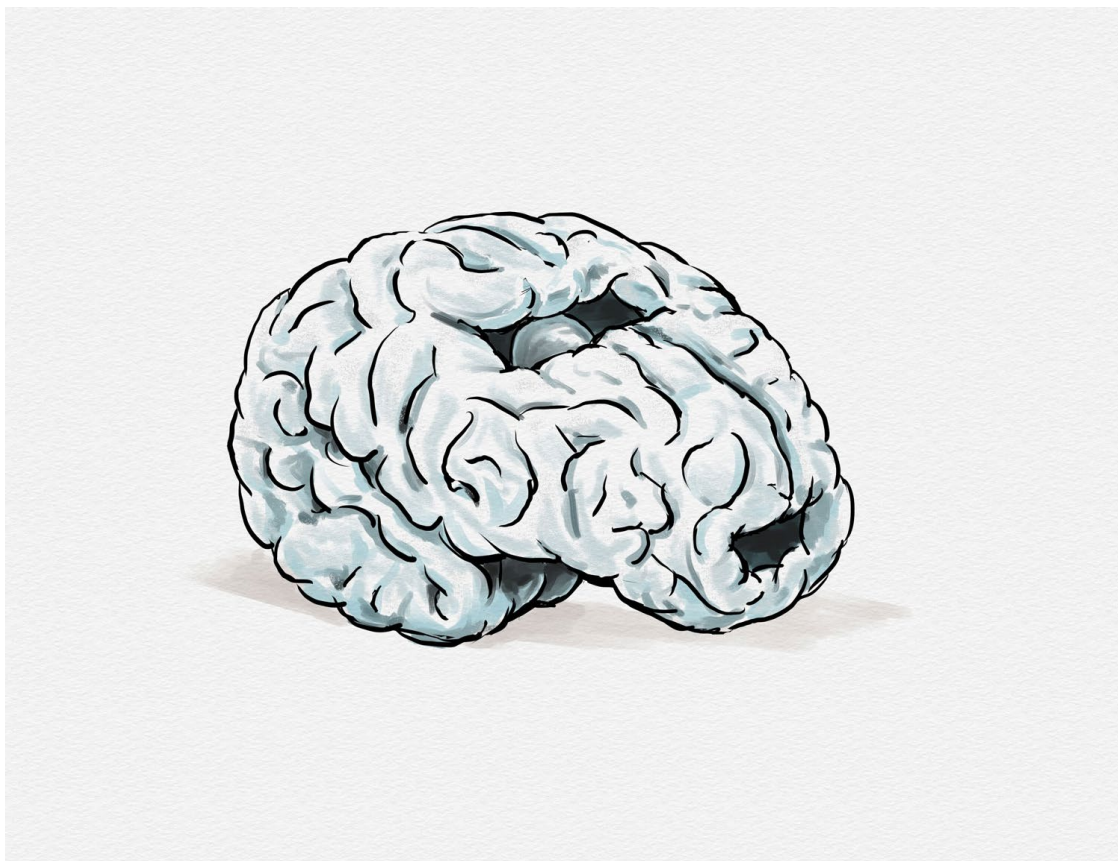
An iron fish with a rough surface. Dropping it into a cooking pot provokes melancholic weeping when the meal is eaten.

Robert C.

A mirror that shows an image of what you look like from the point of view of the person nearest to you.

John D.

A stone whistle carved to look like a human brain.



(Select to view)

Leo G.

A flute carved from a tiefling horn that only creates a good sound when the musician is playing a sad song.

Paul K.

A tiny, corked bottle containing a single vampire fang.

Nick D.

A rusted spinning top that sometimes twirls when nobody is looking at it.

Aron D.

Horse's reins, with a bit that emits opaque, inky red smoke when placed in a horse's mouth.

Edward O.

A stone that looks like a face no matter which angle you look at it.

Chris D.

A baby doll with closable eyes. There seems to be no rhyme or reason as to when the eyes open or close and you could swear you just saw it blink!

Harper Z.

A pocket-sized painting of a hanged figure. Each person who looks at the painting sees a different victim, but no-one ever recognizes them.

Dave P.

A puzzle box with no openings that smells faintly of death. Legend

has it there are many ways to open the box but only one solution will not consign the handler to eternity within it.

John D.

A monocle that shows where blood has been spilled, even after it has been cleaned up.

Leo G.

The sealed last will and testament of a friend who mysteriously disappeared.

Chris D.

A totem of baby teeth that have been embedded in gum-colored glass to form a face. A molar for a mouth, with incisors for eyes and ears.



(Select to view)

Robert C.

A bedroll that feels warm to the touch, but makes the sleeper as cold as a corpse.

Nick D.

A seashell that when put to the ear whispers the final, agonized thoughts of people drowned at sea.

Dave P.

A vial of stone dust from a consecrated tombstone.

John T.

A simple leather cord looped through the hole in a roughly hewn, green crystal amulet that glows when wolves are nearby.

Mira M.

A craftsman's file that's been bent out of shape.

Chris D.

A single ring finger seemingly made of rawhide, with a small abalone shell for a fingernail. When held in one hand, it twitches and flexes to mimic the movement of the ring finger on the other hand.

John D.

A compass whose pointer stopped moving the moment it led to the corpse of a loved one.

Master T.

A silver spider ring. Each time you take a long rest, you awaken to find it on a different finger. When found it is exactly the right size and it resizes daily to fit whichever finger it appears on.

Jane D.

A leather glove that belonged to a murderer who walked free.

Leo G.

A circlet made of the twisted dead roots of a dryad's tree.

Chris D.

A violin strung with humanoid intestines.

Emma H.



A drum that sounds like a skull cracking when hit with a stick.

John D.

A sliver of a green gem with an artificer's rune on the side, coated in a viscous purple mold that seems to grow on it. Believed originally to have been the heart of a warforged that was corrupted and shattered.

Jacob E.

Van Richten's Guide to Ravenloft is available now with an MSRP of \$49.95. Preorder a physical copy at your **local game store**, bookstores such as **Barnes & Noble**, or online at retailers such as **Amazon**. Also available as a digital version at **D&D Beyond, Fantasy Grounds, and Roll20**.



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Unearthed Arcana: Mages of Strixhaven

Adding five subclasses that can be shared by many different types of magic user.

by Makenzie De Armas, Dan Dillon, Jeremy Crawford



(tap to view)

Playtest Material

The material here is presented for playtesting and to spark your imagination. These game mechanics are in draft form, usable in your campaign but not refined by final game development and editing. They aren't officially part of the game and aren't permitted in D&D Adventurers League events.

The university of Strixhaven is home to a wide variety of students and spellcasters, some of whom choose to dedicate themselves to one

of the paths of magic practiced by its five colleges. The five subclasses associated with those colleges are special, with each one designed to be compatible with multiple classes.

These subclasses replace some of a spellcaster's traditional elements. If you're a warlock, the magic of your college serves as your patron; if you're a wizard, the college represents your arcane tradition; if you're a druid, the college counts as your circle; if you're a sorcerer, the magic of the college is the origin of your sorcery; and if you're a bard, your chosen college counts as... well, your college.

The five new subclass options presented courtesy of *Unearthed Arcana* include:

LOREHOLD COLLEGE

Subclass for: Bard, Warlock, and Wizard

Dedicated to the pursuit of history by conversing with ancient spirits and understanding the whims of time itself.

Mages of Lorehold gain access to the cantrip *sacred flame* and the 1st-level spell *comprehend languages*, with further spells added at 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 9th level. They also gain the feature Ancient Companion, welcoming a spirit designed to help further their learning, which lives temporarily in the remnants of an old statue. Choosing which type of spirit to bond with (Healer, Sage, or Warrior) decides whether it can heal them, boost their Intelligence and Wisdom checks, or aid companions with Strength or Dexterity saves.

At 6th level their ancient companion offers further benefits. Those with the Healer spirit increase their hit point maximum and regain additional hit points when healed; Sage spirits provide advantage on ability checks and deal additional force damage; while Warrior spirits allow a weapon attack to be made when a cantrip is cast.

A 10th-level Mage of Lorehold can reopen an opponent's old wounds, making a target that fails a save vulnerable to a chosen damage type. And at 14th level the Mages of Lorehold have learned how to briefly channel the wild nature of time itself, benefitting from Luck to boost their saving throws, using Swiftess for extra movement, or choosing Resistance to lessen bludgeoning, piercing,

and slashing damage.

PRISMARI COLLEGE

Subclass for: Druid, Sorcerer, and Wizard

Dedicated to the visual and performing arts and bolstered with the power of the elements.

Mages of Prismari gain proficiency in two creative skills and add the feature Kinetic Artistry (they can Dash as a bonus action, adding elemental effects as they run). At 6th level, they've honed their elemental expression to gain resistance to cold, fire, or lightning. This resistance can be extended to allies around them when they cast a spell dealing the chosen damage type.

At 10th level, they skillfully infuse their motion with even more potent expressions of elemental might, dealing more damage, adding temporary hit points, or robbing foes of their reactions. While at 14th level their training provides proficiency in Dexterity saving throws and the ability to treat any saving throw of that kind as a at least a 10 on a d20 roll.

QUANDRIX COLLEGE

Subclass for: Sorcerer and Wizard

Dedicated to the study and manipulation of nature's core mathematic principles.

Mages of Quandrix learn the cantrip *guidance* and the 1st-level spell *guiding bolt*, with further spells added at 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 9th level. They also gain the feature Functions of Probability, which can be used to affect the mathematical patterns of reality, increasing or lessening a creature's attack.

At 6th level, they learn how to manipulate kinetic formulas and alter the velocity of another creature, teleporting them to an unoccupied space on a failed save. And at 10th level, they use careful calculations

to reduce an enemy's might, giving it disadvantage on physical saving throws and reducing the damage from its weapon attacks by half.

A 14th-level Mage of Quandrix has achieved the mathematical expertise needed to alter the foundational equations of their very being. They gain resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage, and can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain.

SILVERQUILL COLLEGE

Subclass for: Bard, Warlock, and Wizard

Dedicated to the magic of words, whether encouraging speeches that uplift allies or piercing wit that derides foes.

Mages of Silverquill gain the Eloquent Apprentice feature, which sees them learn a cantrip (*sacred flame* or *vicious mockery*) and two skills. A second feature, Silvery Barbs, allows them to invoke words laced with magic to demoralize their foes and turn their misfortune into a boon to bolster their allies. If they force an enemy to reroll an attack roll, ability check, or saving throw and that enemy subsequently fails, one of their allies gains a reroll.

At 6th level, a Mage of Silverquill learns the darkness spell. Not only can they see normally through this darkness, when a creature they can see starts its turn in it they can choose to deal 2d10 psychic damage to that creature. While at 10th level, they can change the damage type of their spells to ether psychic or radiant, swaying the emotions of the creature they damage to frighten or charm it.

Mages of Silverquill who reach 14th level can bolster their 1st-level Silvery Barbs feature. When a target fails because of a forced reroll, it gains vulnerability to a damage type of the mage's choice. They can also lessen the amount of damage a friendly creature takes by granting it resistance to that damage, while choosing to take psychic damage themselves.

WITHERBLOOM COLLEGE

Subclass for: Druid and Warlock

Dedicated to the alchemy of life and death and harnessing the devastating energies of both.

Mages of Witherbloom gain the feature Essence Tap, which allows them to expend a Hit Die to regain hit points as a bonus action or deal necrotic damage and ignore resistance to it. They also learn the cantrip *spare the dying* and the 1st-level spells *cure wounds* and *inflict wounds*, gaining further spells at 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 9th level.

At 6th level they gain proficiency with herbalism kits and can create magical brews when they finish a long rest. These brews might be used to provide resistance to a chosen damage type, heal 2d6 hit points while also ending a disease or condition, and be applied to a weapon as a poison. The brews retain their magical potency for 24 hours.

A 10th-level Mage of Witherbloom has deepened their connection to the flow of life force. When they deal necrotic damage or restore hit points using a spell, the target takes additional damage or regains additional hit points. And at 14th level when they cast a spell that deals necrotic damage, they drain life energy from the target.

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To see the full treasure trove of *Unearthed Arcana* articles, covering new classes and feats, conversions of rules from previous editions, and much more, [visit the archive](#).

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UNEARTHED ARCANA 2021

Mages of Strixhaven

By Makenzie De Armas, Dan Dillon, and Jeremy Crawford

This playtest document presents five subclasses for DUNGEONS & DRAGONS. Each of these subclasses allows you to play a mage associated with one of the five colleges of Strixhaven, a university of magic. These subclasses are special in that each one is available to more than one class.

This Is Playtest Material

The D&D material in this article is presented for playtesting and to spark your imagination. These game mechanics are in draft form, usable in your D&D campaign but not refined by full game design and editing. They aren't officially part of the game and aren't permitted in D&D Adventurers League events.

Feedback. The best way for you to give us feedback on this material is in the survey we'll release on the D&D website soon. If we decide to make this material official, it will be refined based on your feedback, and then it will appear in a D&D book.

Power Level. The character options you read here might be more or less powerful than options in the *Player's Handbook*. If a design survives playtesting, we adjust its power to the desirable level before official publication. This means an option could be more or less powerful in its final form.

Colleges of Strixhaven

The five subclasses in this document are designed for characters who dedicate themselves to one of the paths of magic practiced at Strixhaven.

The university of Strixhaven is home to a wide variety of students and spellcasters. While individuals are welcome to pursue their magical studies in whichever way they please, some choose to focus exclusively on the fundamentals of one of the university's five colleges:

Lorehold College, dedicated to the pursuit of history by conversing with ancient spirits and understanding the whims of time itself

Prismari College, dedicated to the visual and performing arts and bolstered with the power of the elements

Quandrix College, dedicated to the study and manipulation of nature's core mathematic principles

Silverquill College, dedicated to the magic of words, whether encouraging speeches that uplift allies or piercing wit that derides foes

Witherbloom College, dedicated to the alchemy of life and death and harnessing the devastating energies of both

Using These Subclasses

Unlike regular subclasses, the options presented here are designed to be compatible with multiple classes. The classes that are compatible with each subclass option are specified in each subclass's entry.

Choosing the Subclass

When you choose a subclass for your character (a bard's Bardic College, a wizard's Arcane Tradition, and so on), you can instead choose one of these subclass options, so long as the subclass is compatible with your character's class. You can choose the subclass only once, even if you multiclass into another class that is also compatible with the subclass.

How the subclass manifests in your character's story is up to you. Perhaps your sorcerer's innate spark of elemental magic has been determinedly honed by this schooling ever since they first showed arcane potential, or your warlock eschewed their patron's usual boons for learning these more esoteric manifestations of power. Maybe your druid chose to attend university instead of joining a druidic circle, or your wizard balked at a traditional apprenticeship in favor of newfangled numeromancy.

At Higher Levels

Like regular subclasses, the subclass you choose here grants your character new abilities at higher levels. When your character would normally gain a new subclass feature (as noted in your character's class table), you gain a

feature from this subclass instead. All the subclass features detailed here have a level prerequisite, as noted beneath their name, and you must meet the prerequisite to gain the feature. For example, to gain a feature noted as “Level 6+,” your character must be 6th level or higher in the class for which the subclass was chosen. So if you’re a wizard with the Mage of Prismari subclass, you must be a 6th-level wizard to gain the Favored Medium feature.

When you reach certain levels, you might be eligible to choose from among multiple features in the subclass. When you reach such a point, you select one of these features for your character to gain. Unless otherwise specified, you can gain no more than one subclass feature at a time. For example, if you are a bard with the Mage of Lorehold subclass, at 14th level you gain your choice of either the War Echoes feature or the History’s Whims feature, but not both.

Mage of Lorehold

Bard, Warlock, and Wizard Subclass

Mages of Lorehold are particularly concerned with the forces that underlie and drive history. Drawing inspiration from the scholars and adventurers of old, they manifest the arcane power of the past through ethereal dioramas and fantastical battle prowess. Lorehold mages are often found with a long-dead spirit summoned at their side—for who better to learn ancient history from than one who has experienced it first-hand?

Using This Subclass

Upon selecting the Mage of Lorehold subclass, you gain two features: Lorehold Spells and Ancient Companion.

In this subclass’s features, any reference to your class refers to the class from which you gained the subclass. If you’re a bard, the College of Lorehold counts as your college; if you’re a warlock, the magic of the college serves as your patron; and if you’re a wizard, the college represents your arcane tradition.

When you subsequently reach a level in your class that gives you a subclass feature, you gain one feature of your choice from the options presented here. Each feature has a class level prerequisite, as noted beneath its name. You must meet that prerequisite to gain the feature.

Lorehold Spells

Level 1+ Mage of Lorehold Feature

You learn the cantrip *sacred flame* and the 1st-level spell *comprehend languages*. You learn additional spells when you reach certain levels in this class, as shown on the Lorehold Spells table.

Each of these spells counts as a class spell for you, but it doesn’t count against the number of spells you know. If you are a wizard, you can add these spells to your spellbook upon learning them, without expending any gold, and prepare them as normal.

Lorehold Spells

Class Level	Spells
3rd	<i>knock, locate object</i>
5th	<i>speak with dead, spirit guardians</i>
7th	<i>arcane eye, stone shape</i>
9th	<i>destructive wave, legend lore</i>

Ancient Companion

Level 1+ Mage of Lorehold Feature

You learn to call on the spirits of the ancient dead and house them temporarily in the remnants of old statues, so they may remain longer on this plane to bolster your studies and aid you in battle.

Whenever you finish a short or long rest, you can call forth and bond with one such spirit, who comes to inhabit a Medium, freestanding statue within 10 feet of you to serve as your ancient companion. See this creature’s game statistics in the Ancient Companion stat block, which uses your proficiency bonus (PB) in several places. When you bond with your ancient companion, choose the type of spirit you bond with: Healer, Sage, or Warrior. Your choice of spirit determines certain traits in its stat block. The statue determines the spirit’s appearance.

The ancient companion is friendly to you and your companions and obeys your commands. In combat, the companion shares your initiative count, but it takes its turn immediately after yours. It can move and use its reaction on its own, but the only action it takes on its turn is the Dodge action, unless you take a bonus action on your turn to command it to take another action. That action can be one in its stat block or some other action. If you are incapacitated, the

companion can take any action of its choice, not just Dodge.

As an action, you can touch the ancient companion and expend a spell slot of 1st-level or higher. The ancient companion regains a number of hit points equal to 10 times the level of spell slot expended.

The companion perishes when it drops to 0 hit points, when you bond with a new ancient companion at the end of a short or long rest, or when you die. When the companion perishes, the spirit within returns to its plane of origin, and the statue becomes an inert object.

Ancient Companion

Medium Construct, Any Alignment

Armor Class 14 (natural armor) + 2 (Warrior only)

Hit Points 5 + 5 times your level in this class (the companion has a number of Hit Dice [d8s] equal to your level in this class)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	9 (–1)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Con +2 plus PB, Int +2 plus PB, Wis +2 plus PB

Skills History +2 plus PB, Perception +2 plus (PB × 2)

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion

Senses passive Perception 12 + (PB × 2)

Languages speaks and understands the languages you speak

Challenge — **Proficiency Bonus** equals your bonus

Ancient Fortitude. If damage reduces the companion to 0 hit points, it can make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken, unless the damage is from a critical hit. On a success, the companion drops to 1 hit point instead.

Sage's Counsel (Sage Only). While within 15 feet of the companion, you and your allies gain a +2 bonus to Intelligence and Wisdom checks.

Actions

Spirit Strike. *Melee Weapon Attack:* your spell attack modifier to hit, reach 5 ft., one target you can see. *Hit:* 1d8 + 2 + PB force damage.

Healer's Light (Healer Only). The companion chooses a creature it can see within 15 feet of itself and flares with

invigorating light. The creature gains 1d8 + PB temporary hit points.

Reactions

Warrior's Protection (Warrior Only). When a creature within 5 feet of the companion makes a Strength or Dexterity saving throw, the companion imposes itself between the creature and the danger. The creature can roll a d4 and add the number rolled to the saving throw.

Lessons of the Past

Level 6+ Mage of Lorehold Feature

Through your studies, you learn how to better listen and take to heart the teachings of history. When you bond with your ancient companion, you gain the following additional benefits depending on the type of spirit you chose:

Healer. Your hit point maximum increases by an amount equal to your level in this class, and you gain the same number of hit points. When you regain hit points from a spell, you regain an additional 1d8 hit points.

Sage. You have advantage on ability checks using the Arcana, History, Nature, and Religion skills. Additionally, once per turn, when you deal damage to a creature with a spell of 1st-level or higher, you can deal an additional 1d8 force damage to that creature.

Warrior. If you use your action to cast a cantrip, you can make one weapon attack as part of that action. If that weapon attack hits, the target takes an additional 1d8 radiant damage.

When you bond with a new ancient companion of a different type, you immediately lose the benefits of your previous companion and gain the benefits from the new companion's type.

War Echoes

Level 10+ Mage of Lorehold Feature

By pulling from the magic of the past, you can cause your opponent's old wounds to resonate anew. Once per turn, when a creature you can see hits a target with an attack roll, you can use your reaction to force the target to make a Wisdom saving throw against your spell save DC. On a failure, the target becomes vulnerable to one of the damage types dealt by the attack. This vulnerability lasts until the end of the target's next turn and affects the damage dealt by the triggering attack.

You can use your reaction in this way a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus, and you regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

History's Whims

Level 14+ Mage of Lorehold Feature

Through steeping yourself in the chaotic whims of history, you learn how to briefly channel the wild nature of time itself. As a bonus action, you can enter a state of chronal chaos. When you enter this state, and at the start of each of your subsequent turns while in this state, you gain one of the following benefits of your choice:

Luck. You receive brief flashes of the future, steeling yourself against oncoming assaults. Whenever you make a saving throw against an effect that deals damage, you can roll a d6 and add the number rolled to the total.

Resistance. You rewind time, knitting together injuries as they occur. You have resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage.

Swiftness. Time stutters, slowing others but hurtling you forward. Your movement speed increases by 15 feet, and you do not provoke opportunity attacks.

The benefit lasts until the start of your next turn. You cannot choose the same benefit two rounds in a row.

The state lasts for 1 minute and ends early if you're incapacitated. Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest, unless you expend a spell slot of 4th level or higher to use it again.

Mage of Prismari

Druid, Sorcerer, and Wizard Subclass

Mages of Prismari use surges of elemental energy to express who they are and how they see the world. To them, magic and motion are one and the same; both are exhibitions of raw creativity through which masterpieces are made. In their pursuit of the arts, some Prismari mages focus on perfecting the fine details of their technique, while others prefer to unleash their wild creative visions in dazzling spectacles of elemental power.

Using This Subclass

Upon selecting the Mage of Prismari subclass, you gain two features: Creative Skills and Kinetic Artistry.

In this subclass's features, any reference to your class refers to the class from which you gained the subclass. If you're a druid, the College of Prismari counts as your circle; if you're a sorcerer, the magic of the college is the origin of your sorcery; and if you're a wizard, the college represents your arcane tradition.

When you subsequently reach a level in your class that gives you a subclass feature, you gain one feature of your choice from the options presented here. Each feature has a class level prerequisite, as noted beneath its name. You must meet that prerequisite to gain the feature.

Creative Skills

Level 1+ Mage of Prismari Feature

You gain proficiency in two of the following skills of your choice: Acrobatics, Athletics, Nature, or Performance.

Kinetic Artistry

Level 1+ Mage of Prismari Feature

You can Dash as a bonus action. When you take this bonus action, choose one of the following additional effects:

Boreal Sweep. Icy water swirls around you.

Until the end of your turn, you can move across the surface of water as if it were harmless solid ground. Additionally, when you leave a space within 5 feet of a creature, you can force that creature to make a Strength saving throw against your spell save DC. On a failed save, the creature is knocked prone. A creature can be affected by the water only once each turn.

Scorching Whirl. Flames wreath your steps.

Once before the end of your turn, you can force each creature within 5 feet of you to make a Dexterity saving throw against your spell save DC. On a failure, a creature takes fire damage equal to 1d4 + your spellcasting modifier.

Thunderlight Jaunt. You take on a nimble lightning form. Until the end of your turn, you can move through the space of other creatures, and you do not provoke opportunity attacks. If you end your turn inside a creature's space, you are pushed into the nearest unoccupied space.

You can use a bonus action in this way a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus, and you regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Favored Medium

Level 6+ Mage of Prismari Feature

You have honed your forms of elemental expression to best suit your ideas. Choose one of the following damage types: cold, fire, or lightning. You gain resistance to that damage type.

Additionally, when you cast a spell using a spell slot that deals the chosen damage type, you emit a spectacular aura of artistry, which extends 5 feet from you in every direction (but not through total cover) and lasts until the end of your next turn. While the aura is active, each creature of your choice has resistance to your chosen damage type while within the aura, as you shape your favored elemental medium around them.

You can change your choice of damage type whenever you finish a long rest.

Focused Expression

Level 10+ Mage of Prismari Feature

Honing your talents, you skillfully infuse your motions with even more potent expressions of elemental might. Once per turn when you deal damage to at least one target, you gain an additional effect determined by the damage type chosen for your Favored Medium feature:

Cold. One of the targets of your choice takes an additional 1d6 cold damage and must make a Constitution saving throw against your spell save DC. On a failed save, the target's speed is reduced by 10 feet until the end of its next turn, as ice mires it. A target can be affected by the ice only once per round.

Fire. One of the targets of your choice takes an additional 1d6 fire damage. Fortifying flames then dance around one creature of your choice within 30 feet of you. The chosen creature gains 1d6 temporary hit points.

Lightning. One of the targets of your choice takes an additional 1d6 lightning damage and must make a Dexterity saving throw against your spell save DC. On a failed save, the target is unable to take reactions until the end of its next turn, as residual lightning shocks its form.

Impeccable Physicality

Level 14+ Mage of Prismari Feature

Your relentless dedication and training have instilled an outstanding sense of precision and grace in your art. You gain proficiency in Dexterity saving throws if you do not already have it. Additionally, when you make a Dexterity saving throw, you can treat a d20 roll of a 9 or lower as a 10.

Mage of Quandrix

Sorcerer and Wizard Subclass

For those who become Mages of Quandrix, math and magic go hand-in-hand. Such individuals learn to break down natural phenomena into their core numerical components and, through manipulating those, alter reality on a whim. Their talents range from tangible physics, like multiplying plant growth and redistributing elements of probability and acceleration, to bizarrely theoretical exercises that warp the fundamentals of space and self.

Using This Subclass

Upon selecting the Mage of Quandrix subclass, you gain two features: Quandrix Spells and Functions of Probability.

In this subclass's features, any reference to your class refers to the class from which you gained the subclass. If you're a sorcerer, the magic of Quandrix is part of your sorcerous origin, and if you're a wizard, the college represents your arcane tradition.

When you subsequently reach a level in your class that gives you a subclass feature, you gain one feature of your choice from the options presented here. Each feature has a class level

prerequisite, as noted beneath its name. You must meet that prerequisite to gain the feature.

Quandrix Spells

Level 1+ Mage of Quandrix Feature

You learn the cantrip *guidance* and the 1st-level spell *guiding bolt*. You learn additional spells when you reach certain levels in this class, as shown on the Quandrix Spells table.

Each of these spells counts as a class spell for you, but it doesn't count against the number of spells you know. If you are a wizard, you can add these spells to your spellbook upon learning them, without expending any gold, and prepare them as normal.

Quandrix Spells

Class Level	Spells
3rd	<i>enlarge/reduce, spike growth</i>
5th	<i>aura of vitality, haste</i>
7th	<i>control water, freedom of movement</i>
9th	<i>circle of power, passwall</i>

Functions of Probability

Level 1+ Mage of Quandrix Feature

By iterating on the mathematical patterns of reality, you can nudge chance to tilt around a creature. When you cast a spell using a spell slot that targets at least one creature, you can choose that creature or another creature within 30 feet of it (including yourself) and add one of the following effects:

Diminishing Function. The chosen creature must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw against your spell save DC, or the creature must roll a d6 and subtract the number rolled from the next attack roll it makes before the start of your next turn.

Supplemental Function. Once before the start of your next turn, the chosen creature can roll a d6 and add the number rolled to an attack roll or a saving throw of its choice. The creature can roll the d6 after rolling the d20 but must decide before any effects of the roll occur.

Velocity Shift

Level 6+ Mage of Quandrix Feature

You learn to manipulate kinetic formulas and alter the velocity of another creature. When a

creature you can see starts its turn or moves to a space within 30 feet of you, you can use your reaction to force the creature to make a Charisma saving throw against your spell save DC, which it can choose to fail. On a failure, the creature is teleported to an unoccupied space of your choice that you can see within 30 feet of you.

You can use your reaction in this way a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus, and you regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Null Equation

Level 10+ Mage of Quandrix Feature

Through careful calculations, you beset your enemies with abstract equations that reduce their might. Once per turn, immediately after dealing damage to a creature, you can force the creature to make a Constitution saving throw against your spell save DC. On a failure, the creature has disadvantage on Strength and Dexterity saving throws, and its weapon attacks deal only half damage. These effects last until the start of your next turn.

You can use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus, and you regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Quantum Tunneling

Level 14+ Mage of Quandrix Feature

Your mathematical expertise extends to altering the foundational equations of your very being. You gain resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage.

Additionally, you can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain, but you take 1d10 force damage for every 5 feet you move while inside another creature or object. If you end your turn inside a creature or an object, you are shunted into the nearest unoccupied space you last occupied.

Mage of Silverquill

Bard, Warlock, or Wizard Subclass

Mages of Silverquill hone the power of words. They channel the magic of light and shadow through words, whether spoken aloud, written, or signed through gestures. The words of a mage

of Silverquill bring salvation to their allies and despair to their enemies.

Using This Subclass

Upon selecting the Mage of Silverquill subclass, you gain two features: Eloquent Apprentice and Silvery Barbs.

In this subclass's features, any reference to your class refers to the class from which you gained the subclass. If you're a bard, the College of Silverquill counts as your college, if you're a warlock, the college counts as your patron, and if you're a wizard, the college counts as your tradition.

When you subsequently reach a level in your class that gives you a subclass feature, you gain one feature of your choice from the options presented here. Each feature has a class level prerequisite, as noted beneath its name. You must meet that prerequisite to gain the feature.

Eloquent Apprentice

Level 1+ Mage of Silverquill Feature

You learn one cantrip of your choice, either *sacred flame* or *vicious mockery*. It doesn't count against the number of cantrips you know, and it is added to your class spell list if it isn't there already.

Additionally, you gain proficiency in your choice of two of the following skills: Deception, Intimidation, Performance, Persuasion, or Insight.

Silvery Barbs

Level 1+ Mage of Silverquill Feature

You can invoke words laced with magic to demoralize your foes and turn their misfortune into a boon to bolster your allies. Immediately after a creature you can see within 60 feet of you succeeds on an attack roll, an ability check, or a saving throw, you can use your reaction to demoralize the creature. Unless the creature is immune to being charmed, it rerolls the d20 and must use the lower roll. If the attack roll, ability check, or saving throw then fails, you can choose a different creature you can see within 60 feet of you (you can choose yourself). That creature is empowered, and can reroll one attack roll, ability check, or saving throw it makes within 1 minute and use the higher result. A creature can be

empowered by only one use of this feature at a time.

Once a creature fails an attack roll, an ability check, or a saving throw because of a reroll forced by this feature, you can't use the feature again until you finish a long rest, unless you expend a spell slot to use it again.

Inky Shroud

Level 6+ Mage of Silverquill Feature

You learn the *darkness* spell, and it is added to your class spell list if it isn't there already. If you are a wizard, you add it to your spellbook, if it's not there already.

You can cast the spell without expending a spell slot, and you can't do so again until you finish a long rest. When you cast the spell in this way, you can see normally through the darkness created, and when a creature you can see starts its turn in the darkness, you can deal 2d10 psychic damage to that creature.

You can also cast the spell normally, without the additional effects, by using spell slots you have of 2nd level or higher.

Infusion of Eloquence

Level 10+ Mage of Silverquill Feature

When you cast a spell that deals damage, you can invoke additional words of power to change the spell's damage type to your choice of psychic or radiant. Any creature damaged by the spell takes extra damage equal to your proficiency bonus and has its emotions swayed with despair or adoration, based on the damage type dealt:

Psychic. The creature is frightened of you until the start of your next turn.

Radiant. The creature is charmed by you until the start of your next turn.

You can use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus, and you regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Word of Power

Level 14+ Mage of Silverquill Feature

You can invoke a word of power that is the pinnacle of your magical study. You gain the following options:

Deadly Despair. When the target of your Silvery Barbs fails an attack roll, an ability check, or a saving throw because of the reroll, you can invoke a word of despair to give the target vulnerability to one damage type of your choice until the start of your next turn.

Selfless Invocation. When a creature you can see within 60 feet of you takes damage, you can invoke a word of power using your reaction to grant the creature resistance to that damage, and you take an amount of psychic damage equal to the damage that creature takes.

Mage of Witherbloom

Druid and Warlock Subclass

Mages of Witherbloom draw their magic from the energy that endlessly flows from life to death, and back again. They see the duality of thriving life and inevitable death in all things, tapping and manipulating the transition of energy between these states. Some Witherbloom adherents focus on vital energies to nurture life and empower others, while others embrace the drain of vitality into decay to sap and strike down their foes.

Using This Subclass

Upon selecting the Mage of Witherbloom subclass, you gain two features: Witherbloom Spells and Essence Tap.

In this subclass's features, any reference to your class refers to the class from which you gained the subclass. If you're a druid, the College of Witherbloom counts as your circle, and if you're a warlock, the college counts as your patron.

When you subsequently reach a level in your class that gives you a subclass feature, you gain one feature of your choice from the options presented here. Each feature has a class level prerequisite, as noted beneath its name. You must meet that prerequisite to gain the feature.

Witherbloom Spells

Level 1+ Mage of Witherbloom Feature

You learn the cantrip *spare the dying* and the 1st-level spells *cure wounds* and *inflict wounds*. You learn additional spells when you reach certain

levels in this class, as shown on the Witherbloom Spells table.

Each of these spells count as a class spell for you, but it doesn't count against the number of spells you know. If you are a druid, you always have the spells prepared, and they don't count against the number of spells you can prepare each day.

Witherbloom Spells

Class Level	Spells
3rd	<i>lesser restoration, ray of enfeeblement</i>
5th	<i>revivify, vampiric touch</i>
7th	<i>blight, greater restoration</i>
9th	<i>antilife shell, mass cure wounds</i>

Essence Tap

Level 1+ Mage of Witherbloom Feature

As a bonus action, you can draw on a reservoir of life essence to empower yourself for 1 minute, or until you use this feature again. For the duration, you gain one of the following benefits of your choice:

Overgrowth. When you choose this benefit, and as a bonus action on subsequent turns while the benefit lasts, you can expend and roll one Hit Die. You regain a number of hit points equal to the number rolled plus your spellcasting ability modifier.

Withering Strike. When you deal damage, you can change the damage type to necrotic, and you ignore resistance to necrotic damage.

You can use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus, and you regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Witherbloom Brew

Level 6+ Mage of Witherbloom Feature

You gain proficiency with herbalism kits if you don't already have it.

When you finish a long rest, you can use an herbalism kit and a pot or cauldron to create magical brews. You create a number of brews equal to your proficiency bonus. Each brew requires its own flask. A brew retains its magical potency for 24 hours or until it is used. For each brew, choose one of the following effects:

Fortifying. When you create this brew, choose a damage type from the following list: cold, fire, necrotic, poison, or radiant. A creature can drink this brew or administer it to another creature as an action. The recipient gains resistance to the chosen damage type for 1 hour.

Quickening. A creature can drink this brew or administer it to another creature as an action. The recipient regains 2d6 hit points, and one disease or condition from the following list affecting the recipient ends (brew user's choice): charmed, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned, stunned.

Toxifying. As an action, a creature can apply this brew to a simple or martial weapon. The next time the weapon or a piece of ammunition fired by it hits a creature within 1 hour, the target takes 2d6 poison damage and must succeed on a Constitution saving throw against your spell save DC or be poisoned for 1 minute.

Witherbloom Adept

Level 10+ Mage of Witherbloom Feature

Your connection to the flow of life force deepens. Once per turn when you deal necrotic damage or restore hit points using a spell, one target of the spell takes additional damage or regains additional hit points equal to your proficiency bonus.

Withering Vortex

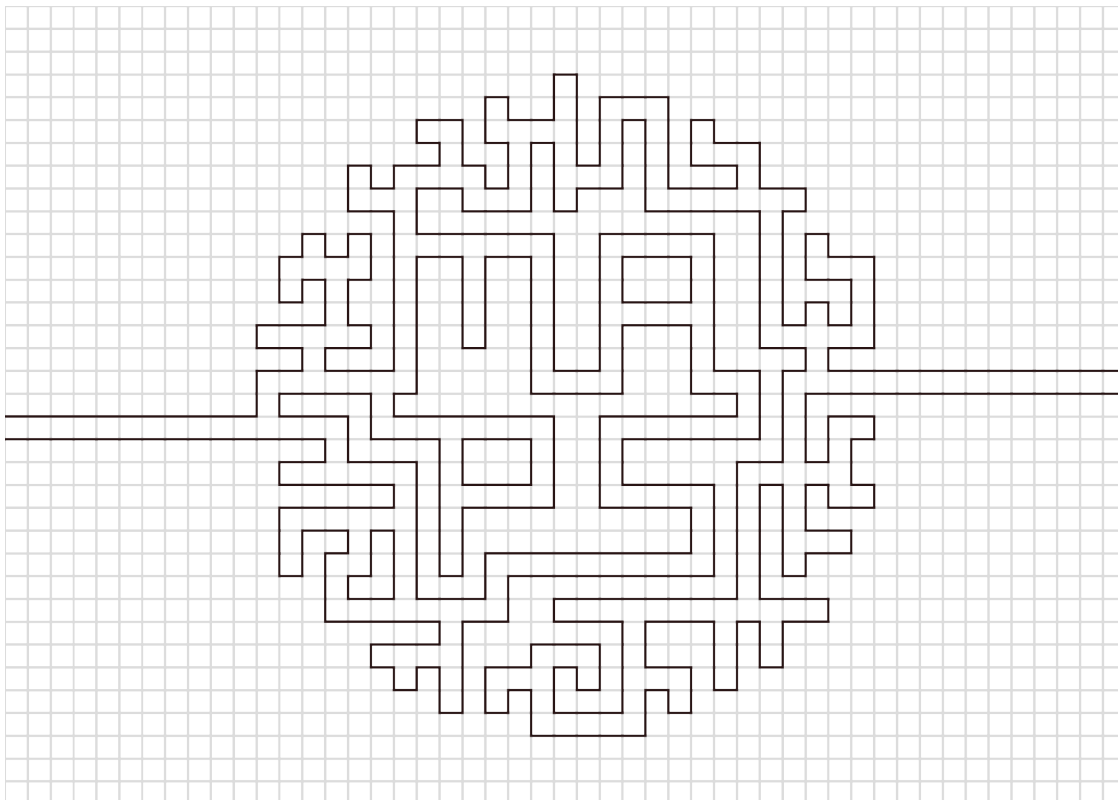
Level 14+ Mage of Witherbloom Feature

When you cast a spell using a spell slot that deals necrotic damage to any number of creatures that aren't Undead or Constructs, choose one of the creatures that took damage. You drain an amount of life energy equal to half the damage dealt to the chosen creature. One creature other than yourself that you can see within 30 feet of you regains a number of hit points equal to the life energy drained.

You can use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus, and you regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Maps (and Art) of the Month

Dare to explore the mist-bound Domains of Dread? Here are images and maps to help run your first encounter in Van Richten's Guide to Ravenloft!



*WARNING: THESE MAPS MAY CONTAIN SPOILERS FOR
CANDLEKEEP MYSTERIES AND VAN RICHTEN'S GUIDE
TO RAVENLOFT.*

CANDLEKEEP MYSTERIES

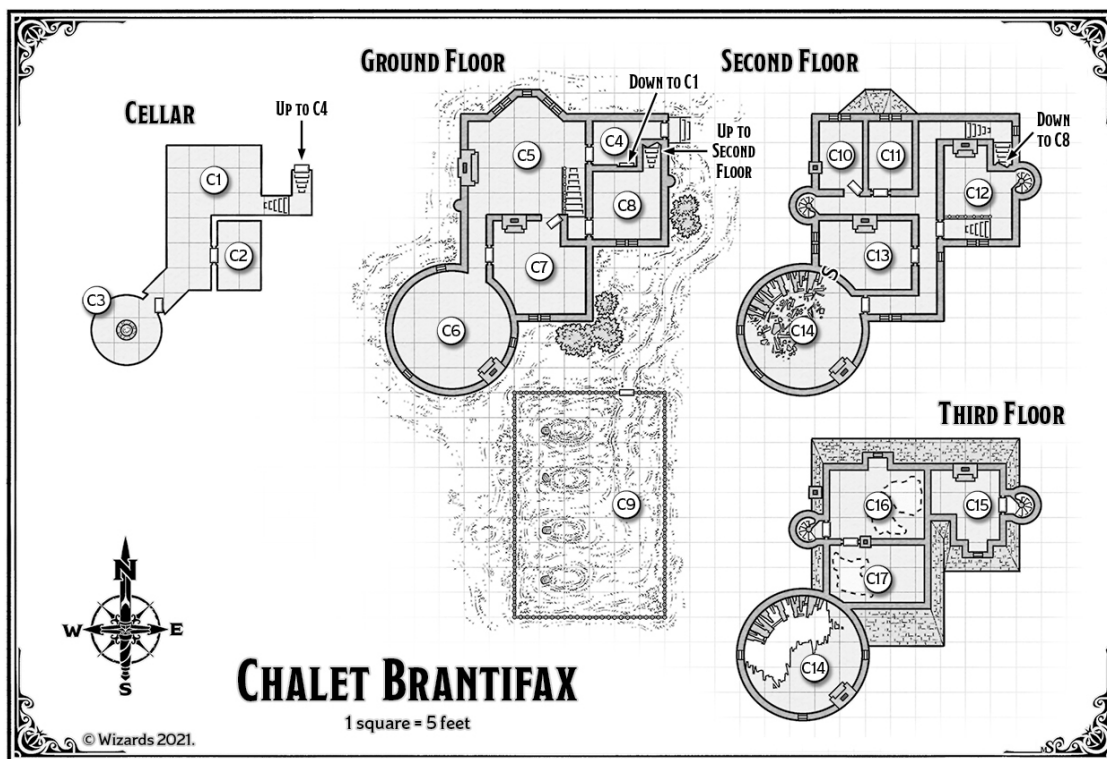
Considering the extensive adventure content found within *Candlekeep Mysteries*, we wanted to provide further advice and resources to help Dungeon Masters running games based in that vast library!

This issue, we look at the third encounter, providing maps and illustrations for *Book of the Raven*.

Book of the Raven

In this adventure for 3rd-level characters, a treasure map tucked inside a book beckons adventurers to a remote hilltop chalet occupied by a secret society that shuns visitors.

Written by Chris Perkins, you can [read our interview](#) with him about the adventure. As an added bonus, *Book of the Raven* provides a crossover opportunity to visit the lands of Ravenloft—as it further introduces the Vistani, wereravens, and touches upon the Domains of Dread.



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CHALET BRANTIFAX TAGGED
 CHALET BRANTIFAX UNTAGGED
 HARRN MAUSOLEUM TAGGED
 HARRN MAUSOLEUM UNTAGGED
 ART

Candlekeep Mysteries is available now at your **local game store**, bookstores such as **Barnes & Noble**, **Books-a-Million**, or online at

retailers like **Amazon**. Also available for order at **D&D Beyond, Fantasy Grounds, and Roll20**.

VAN RICHTEN'S GUIDE TO RAVENLOFT

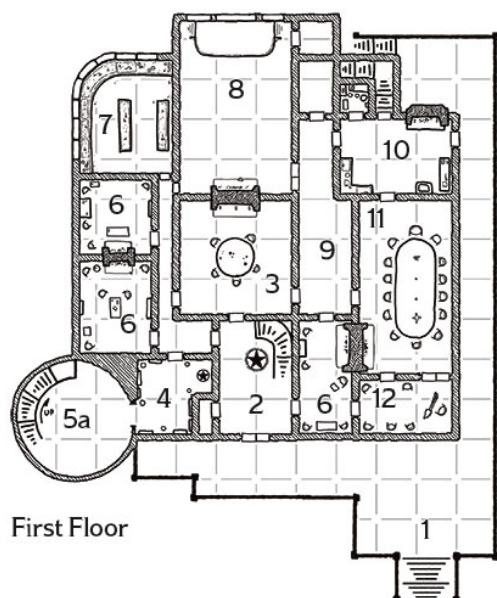
Think of the lands of Ravenloft as mist-wrapped islands drifting through the boundless gloom of the Shadowfell. Many such domains lie hidden within these supernatural mists, and of these secret realms, the most terrifying are those born of your nightmares and given grim life through your adventures.

Van Richten's Guide to Ravenloft includes one such adventure for DMs looking to plunge straight into the mists. *The House of Lament* provides adventure material to advance a party from 1st to 3rd level. Plus, its climax can also serve as a springboard into future campaigns in the Domains of Dread, should you wish to continue your journey into those haunted lands.

The House of Lament

This catastrophically haunted structure doesn't rush to reveal its terrors. Rather, its history, threats, and phantasmal inhabitants reveal themselves gradually and in a variety of ways...

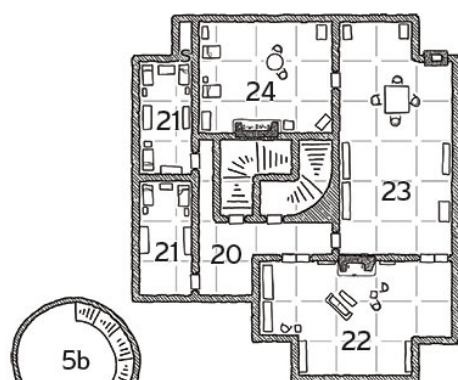
At certain times in the adventure, characters have the opportunity to commune with the House of Lament's spirits, contacting them directly through a series of séances involving a spirit board. As an online resource, you can find a downloadable spirit board (as well as a randomized Tarokka deck) on the official *Van Richten's Guide to Ravenloft* product page.



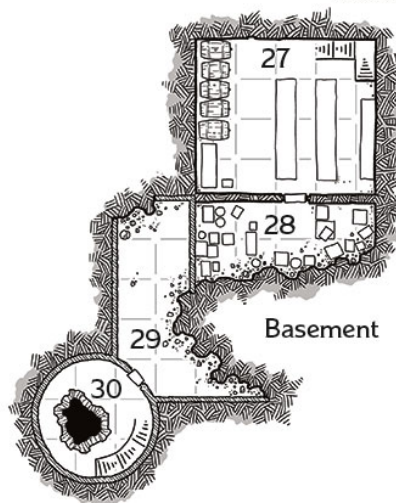
First Floor



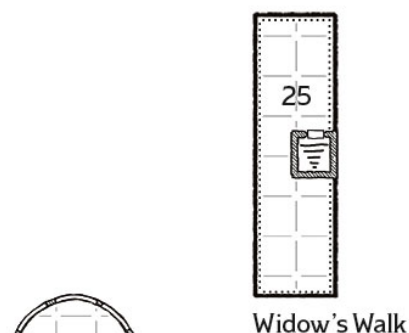
Second Floor



Third Floor



Basement



Widow's Walk



Beneath the House

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TAGGED
UNTAGGED
ART


Van Richten's Guide to Ravenloft is available now at your **local game store**, bookstores such as **Barnes & Noble**, **Books-a-Million**,

Scale: 1 square = 10 feet

or online at retailers like **Amazon**. Also available for preorder at **D&D Beyond**, **Fantasy Grounds**, and **Roll20**.

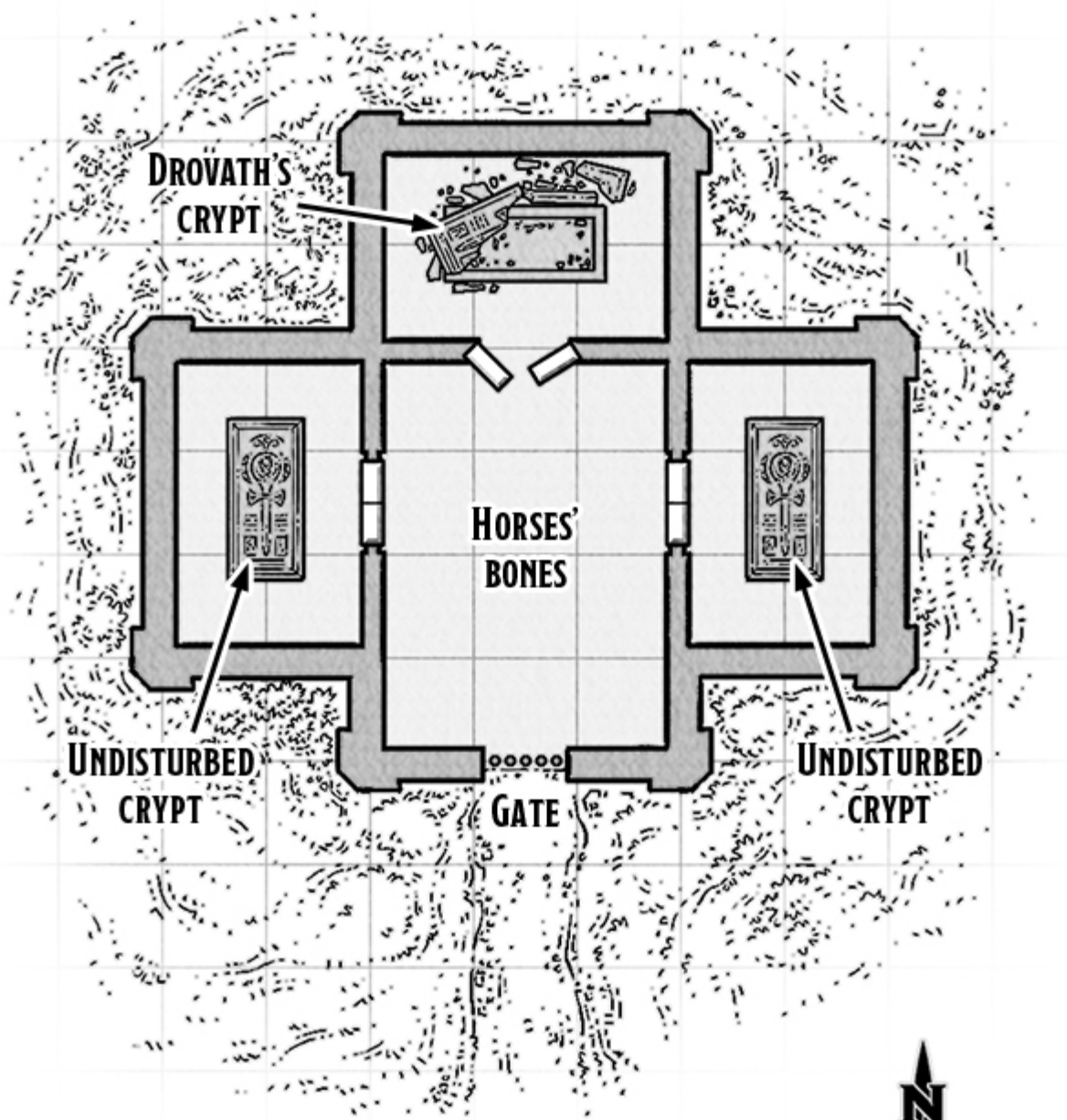
CARTOGRAPHERS

As always, our appreciation goes out to our amazing cartographers from *Candlekeep Mysteries* and *Van Richten's Guide to Ravenloft*. These cartographers include Francesca Baerald, Jared Blando, Tim Hartin, Dyson Logos, Sean Macdonald, and Mike Schley.

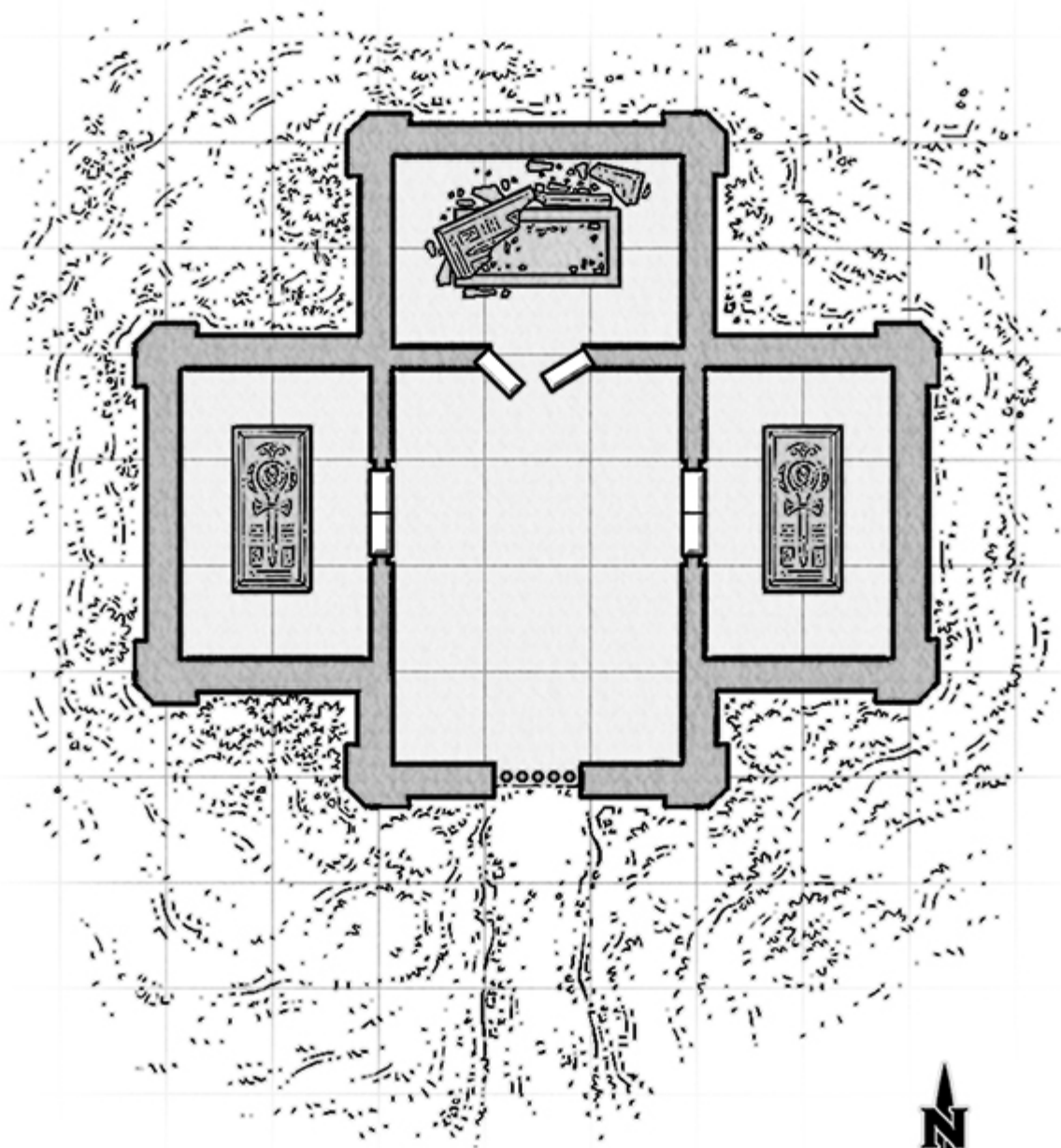


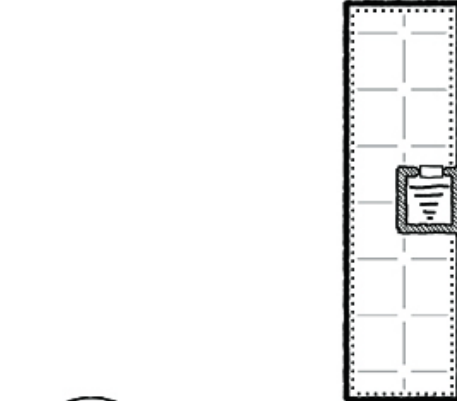
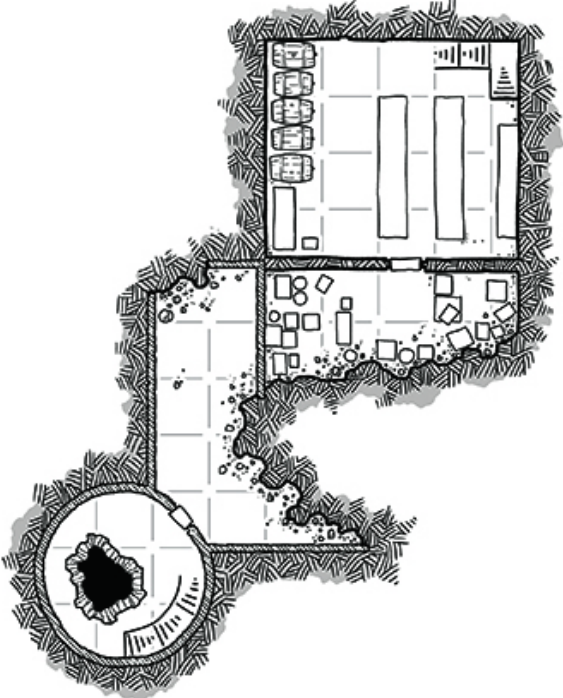
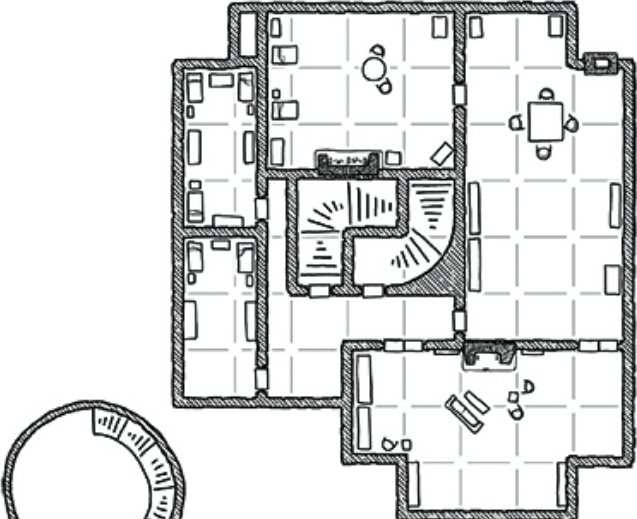
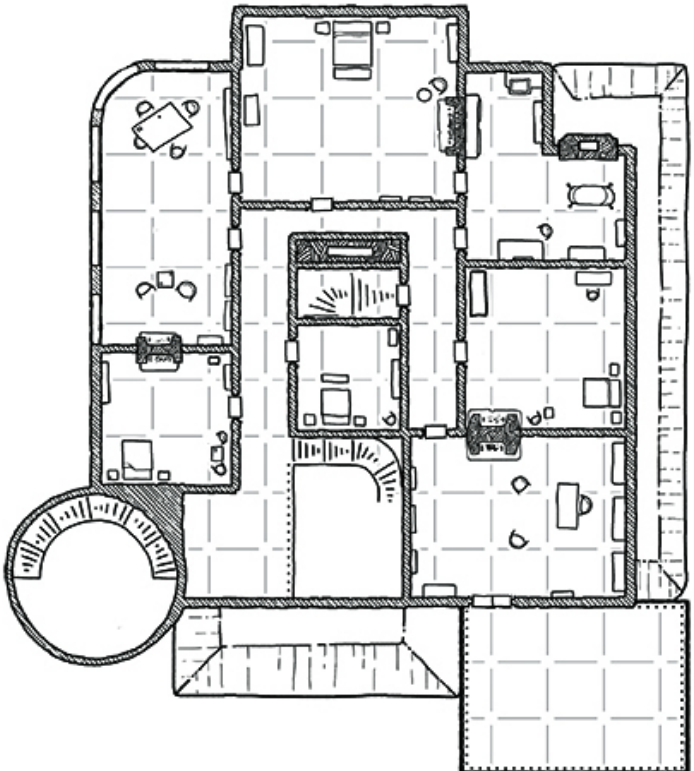
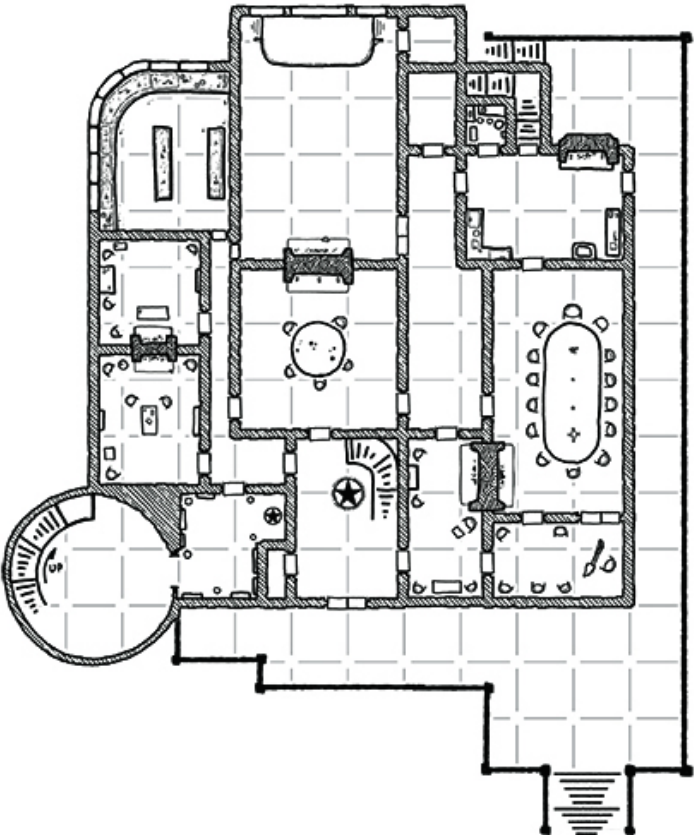
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HARRN MAUSOLEUM



1 square = 5 feet







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D&D Virtual Play Weekends - Ravenloft: Mist Hunters

The latest D&D Adventurers League storyline takes a wander through the Domains of Dread.

If, like us, you've been flipping through *Van Richten's Guide to Ravenloft* and wondering how your party's going to cobble together enough vacation time to visit all those Domains of Dread, allow us to show you a brochure for the Adventurers League storyline that debuts at July's **Virtual Play Weekend**. As revealed in the previous issue of *Dragon+*, *Ravenloft: Mist Hunters*—a new 14-episode series for the Adventurers League—focuses on numerous subgenres of horror as players explore multiple Domains of Dread. We can now reveal that the stops on that travel itinerary will all be domains that appear in *Van Richten's Guide*, as players get a chance to visit the rich worlds contained within the book.

"Mist Hunters will exclusively visit domains that are featured in Van

Richten's Guide to Ravenloft,” writer Travis Woodall confirms, promising horror of every flavor. “A really neat part of the Domains of Dread is seeing all the different types of storytelling available to a DM. Being able to travel to different domains adds flavor to the campaign, and with our players skipping all over the place we can throw in multiple genres of horror. Every other session or so they’re going to visit a place that torments them in a whole new way.”



The campaign is based on a narrative by Chris Lindsey, Chris Tulach, and F. Wesley Schneider, which has been developed by Travis. It starts in a Domain of Dread where everyone lives in fear of being exposed. Travis describes its horror vibe as imposter syndrome for the social ranks, with the lower class pretending to be middle class, and the middle class pretending that they belong in the higher echelons of society.

“Everyone lives in constant fear of being discovered. If they are, the Dark Lord of the domain disintegrates them. Our campaign starts there with the characters being asked to search for a missing scholar, who works for an organization called the Order of the Guardian. Alanik Rey has been hired by the order to find her and has reached out to the characters to assist him with the investigation. From there, the clues lead them all over the place, hopping from domain to domain—including some familiar destinations, with excursions to Barovia, Falkovnia, and Har’Akir.”

Ravenloft: Mist Hunters focuses on social interaction and investigation, with less of an emphasis on tactical combat, making it perfectly suited to theater-of-the-mind play. The campaign’s fourteen adventures begin and end with major, multi-table adventures known as Epics. It’s a style the D&D team has already successfully

employed for a major event.

“Historically, the D&D Open has always been a combat-fest but we flipped that on its head for the *Waterdeep: Dragon Heist* campaign and turned it into a huge social interaction. It was wildly successful and we’ve used that as our inspiration for the Epic that kicks off this storyline,” Travis explains.

“The characters will have to infiltrate a masquerade ball to investigate the disappearance and avoid being found out for the charlatans that they are. The Epics are particularly suited to dialing up the social aspect of the game, as we’ll have wandering NPCs going from table to table and other fun encounters.

“The setting also lends itself really well to a game focused more on the social and exploration pillars. Each domain is different and allows us to tell a new kind of story, while following the clues that the characters uncover during their investigations. It’s possible as they discover nefarious plots that the search for the missing scholar will turn out to be the least of their concerns!”

***Ravenloft: Mist Hunters*, the new storyline for the Adventurers League, makes its debut on July 9, 2021 at the D&D **Virtual Play Weekend**.**

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The Best of the Dungeon Masters Guild

This issue we audition unusual (and fun!) warlock patrons and chat with Matthew Whitby about The Dungeon Master's Guild House podcast.



Ever since *Van Richten's Guide to Ravenloft* landed in shops, the most terrifying weather report has been mist! As players have begun to be devoured by the fog that serves as a conduit between the Domains of Dread, there are now many more strange and supremely powerful beings they might encounter. Perhaps if they can come face to face with these creatures and make a bargain, they can become warlocks serving their needs. If you're looking for mighty entities that would make compelling patrons, we've scoured the DMs Guild for you.



Create-A-Patron: A Warlock Patron Creation Guide, by Matthew Gravelyn
Price: \$1.99 (PDF)

Matthew has used his own research into warlock patrons to build a framework to help you create your own as quickly and easily as possible. He uses two patrons of his own devising—the Unburnt and the Deceiver—to illustrate his design points in each section, publishing them as full examples at the end of the guide for you to use in your game.

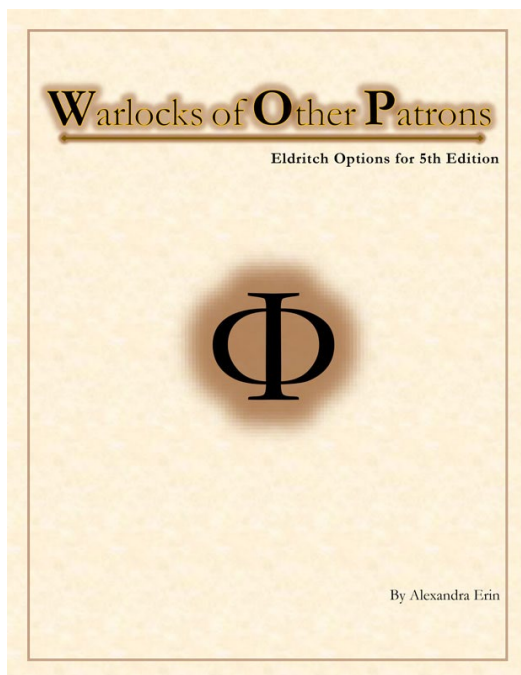
[DOWNLOAD PDF](#)



The Patron Primer, by Spilled Ale Studios
Price: \$6 (PDF)

This is an amazing place to start your journey of discovery when looking for a compelling warlock patron. Going well beyond archfey and fiends as potential options, this extensive list of powerful beings includes slaad lords, primordials, star-like elder evils, and a number of different varieties of lich. Choose your poison here before heading off to research them more fully.

[DOWNLOAD PDF](#)



Warlocks of Other Patrons, by Alexandra Erin

Price: \$4.99 (PDF)

An excellent discussion of how to create a pact is followed by well thought out options to bolster melee-based warlocks (including the *eldritch strike* cantrip). Rules for otherworldly patrons such as the Balance, the Living Dead, the Stars, and Primal Spirits are included, while additional boons and new eldritch invocations and backgrounds add plenty of flavor.

[DOWNLOAD PDF](#)



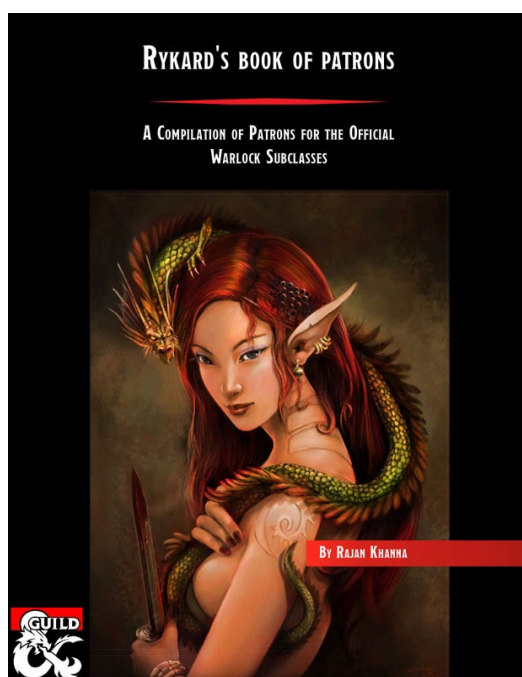
Dark Masters—A 5th Edition Warlock Patron Collection

Price: \$2.99 (PDF)

Clever takes on the powers granted by abyssal and devilish patrons open this selection, leading onto further interesting choices based around greed (the Corrupted King), bestial combat (Cursed Beast), a gift for lying (the Faceless Deceiver), the early darkness of the world (the Great Shadow), the apocalypse (the Herald of Doom), freedom from death (the Lich), embracing the monster within (Maker of

Monsters), bloodlust (the Reaper), contact with a spirit (the Specter), and an enthralling undead (the Vampire). It's an impressive selection of fully fleshed out patrons and you can get it for free until the next issue of *Dragon+* launches—see below.

DOWNLOAD PDF



Rykard's Book of Patrons, by
Rajan Khanna

Price: \$2.99 (PDF)

Rykard's Book of Patrons emphasizes flavor over rules. Patrons are described by the goals that guide them, the types of bargains they prefer to make, and how they like to communicate with the warlock (for example, the Great Old Ones may not use spoken language, if they speak at all). There are also new boons that can be granted, as well as more punitive "goads" a patron might

impose as a penalty when the warlock disappoints them!

DOWNLOAD PDF

CHARACTER CRUCIBLE
ACERERAK
THE FORGOTTEN ONE
OTHERWORLDLY PATRON

by Mark Craddock

Special Thanks to E. Gary Gyga, Matthew Sernett, Ari Marmell,
David Noonan, Robert J. Schwalb, and Matt Rieper



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PAGE 1

Character Crucible: Acererak, by
Mark Craddock

Price: \$1.99 (PDF)

Acererak is best known as the architect of such classic dungeons as the Tomb of Horrors and the Tomb of Annihilation. Tapping into this lich's power offers some neat rewards in Mark Craddock's patron build, including the ability to become invisible to undead at 1st level and regaining hit points from a creature you deal necrotic damage to at 14th level.

DOWNLOAD PDF



Book of Patrons, by E.R.F. Jordan
Price: \$3.99 (PDF)

It's the end of the world as we know it—and we feel fine, because our patron is the Apocalypse Incarnate! With different gifts depending on whether you've struck a deal with Death, Famine, Plague, or War, this is the subclass to usher in the end of all things. There are five other patrons on offer, with the Dream Eater (which taps into the connections between the various planes of existence and the Plane

of Dreams) another standout.

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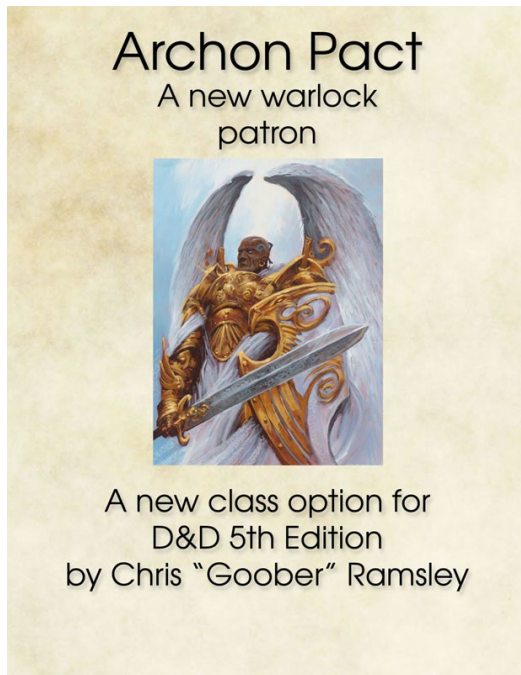


Warlock: Otherworldly Patron—
The Broodqueen, by Alec Stewart,
Marcus Westphal, and Nick
Tegtmeier
Price: PWYW \$0.50 Suggested
(PDF)

Partnering with an insectoid queen has its benefits. From temporary AC boosts as you secrete translucent armor to sprouting wings or compound eyes, the power this primordial creature offers a warlock comes with a dash of body horror. Our favorite addition is the 10th level ability to cast *infestation* as a reaction when a creature within 30 feet damages

you.

[DOWNLOAD PDF](#)



Warlock Patron: Archon Pact, by
Chris "Goober" Ramsley
Price: \$1.00 (PDF)

"An archon is as strange and alien as any fey, with designs that place the importance of law and order on equal ground as goodness," Chris says in his introduction to this celestial patron. The 14th level Mark of Justice that compels a creature to avoid crimes on pain of 5d10 psychic damage brings the law, while a 6th level ability that borrows the archon's menacing aura brings the order.

[DOWNLOAD PDF](#)

Download Dark Masters—A 5th Edition Warlock Patron Collection for free!

This macabre cadre of dark entities that hunger for power and death offer new playstyles, roleplay opportunities, and goals for warlocks. The varied patrons listed include: The Archdevil; the Corruptor; the Cursed Beast; the Demon Prince; the Diseased One; the Faceless Deceiver; the Great Shadow; the Herald of Doom; the Lich Lord; the Maker of Monsters; the Reaper; the Specter; and the Vampire Count.

Dragon+ is offering you the chance to download the PDF version of *Dark Masters*, by clicking the link below. It will remain free until the next issue of *Dragon+* is released. Enjoy!

[DOWNLOAD THE FREE PDF](#)

Q&A: THE DUNGEON MASTER'S GUILD HOUSE



Matthew Whitby has turned a desire to chat with interesting DMs Guild creators into a long-running weekly podcast. *The Dungeon Master's Guild House* highlights tips and techniques to boost your content creation, for both newbies and platinum sellers on the DMs Guild. He tells *Dragon+* how having your own chat show is a great way to start a collaboration with other creators.

You're currently a PhD student at the University of York, England. Do those studies tie into your podcasting?

I'm a games researcher, which always blows my mind. I'm looking at games from a slightly different perspective, which is funny, because the topic of my PhD is how games challenge people's perspective. That could be anything from a life-changing in-game experience to being prompted to discover a topic that you otherwise wouldn't have considered. Some of these perspective-changing moments are narratively driven, whereas others are caused by a mechanical twist. And there are those in the middle, where it's a harmony of both mechanics and narrative. I've got one more year to go and I believe once I finally achieve my doctorate they give me a cape and a *Guitar Hero* controller.

You're part of a group called the Intelligent Games Game Intelligence program. What do they do?

IGGI is a consortium that currently brings together the University of York, Goldsmiths University, Queen Mary University in London, as well as the University of Essex. It includes people from the hardcore machine programming side, whereas I'm from a less technical background and more into floaty game design. It's a very broad PhD program and even within my cohorts we've got people looking at everything from choice within open worlds, algorithmic language processing, and procedural generation.

The big discovery coming out of my research is that there are games that try to facilitate these challenging experiences, but a good amount of what happens is down to what the player brings to the table. That sounds almost self-explanatory because a good amount of what happens with any experience is down to what someone brings to the table. But it's interesting that, especially when it comes to moments where players are embodying a character, that essence of them is always in there.



How did *The Dungeon Master's Guild House* podcast get started?

I'll be honest—and I've told a good number of my guests this—it was purely because I wanted to chat with cool designers. It's been over a year and a half of my life so far and there are a lot of episodes. But the energy I get from chatting with someone keeps me going, because creativity is infectious.

How do you choose your interview subjects?

I still scour online for guests but it's been nice to reach a point where people are approaching me. A good chunk of the podcast is me asking about people's creative processes and that can be someone who's written their first encounter to someone who's on their tenth bestselling adventure. Both of those people have useful insights to share. Each episode is a mixed bag, where you never know if you're going to get lore tips, design ideas, marketing or production suggestions. Everyone is welcome to come and have a chat, I'm just a vessel.



Is there one interview you've really enjoyed?

One of my favorites is with **Ginny Loveday**. It was so insightful when it came to talking about design. It was one of those chats where you blink and the hour has gone. And that was prior to us collaborating together. I didn't set out for that to happen but some of my podcasts do naturally turn into collaborations. The cameras stop rolling and you're chatting about design and you mention that you've got this idea, and they tell you about a project they're working on. That conversation opened the door to working with Ginny.

What project did you create together?

Tyche's Torment is an adventure about a deceased Forgotten Realms god. Ginny singlehandedly saved that project, because we were doing all these deep lore dives and she realized that there's a novel about this very topic. It's called ***Tymora's Luck*** and I realized I now had a book report to write because that topic is the essence of the adventure. Had I been working on *Tyche's Torment* alone, I'd have missed that.

Which guest gave good advice on the mechanics of writing content for the DMs Guild?

Amber Litke runs a design challenge that creates a monster stat block three times a week: every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. When you've created a stat block 200 or more times, you pick up some interesting tidbits and insights. Being able to hear about these deep dives into that side of things was invaluable.



What tips would you give someone who's thinking of starting their own podcast?

Go in with an understanding of what your podcast is aiming for. Even though *The Dungeon Master's Guild House* is quite broad, I'm trying to get to the heart of what an individual's creative process is like. Once you nail what it is you're aiming for, then you can wander a little.

You also write for the DMs Guild. Which came first: your writing or the podcast?

My writing was more of a driver for the podcast. The interest I have in understanding and unpicking games to see how they work as part of my PhD studies naturally led me to design and create my own content. I published that on the DMs Guild. It's a very wholesome and self-supportive community and I made a conscious decision that I wanted to engage more with it. You're able to post a solo project and test the waters, and there are experts ready to usher you under their wing and invite you into collaborations. And I wasn't tired of my own voice, so I thought why not start a podcast?

There's quite a variation in your DMs Guild work, from standard adventures to a murder mystery, as well as creatures such as the boss goblins, magical items, and encounters. Do you get inspiration and then follow that idea, or is this an attempt to try writing in lots of different formats?

I think I'm an adventure writer at heart. And encounters are my sneaky way of writing more of those, because an encounter is really a

short adventure. Even writing a monster stat block gives you the chance to include multiple adventure hooks in the text.

I also enjoy looking at the official D&D hardcover books and adding to those. That's how the encounters and items for Waterdeep and Baldur's Gate came to life. Those hardcover books can't be 500 pages long so there are always interesting pieces of content and lore other writers can add. Generally, the official books plant an adventure seed in my head which I want to chase. And other times I just want to kill Volo.

You got some very nice comments from Ed Greenwood about *Volo's Guide to Getting Murdered*. What was it like to get that kind of feedback?

I still have to pinch myself. It's very humbling. The allure of the DMs Guild is that you have access to all of these interesting characters. I took a few liberties with *Volo's Guide to Getting Murdered* but I do stick to the established Forgotten Realms lore. I feel like being able to run with these stories is the essence of the DMs Guild.



What tips would you give anyone who's thinking of writing for the DMs Guild for the first time?

Write what you love. You can always tell when someone was passionate about the project. And know when to stop working on a project and send it out. In a week's time you might be horrified by some of the mistakes, but you can always go back again and do

corrections. It's gratifying to share the work and move on to the next thing. You also learn by doing. In the same way that Amber creates three monster stat blocks a week, I write a random encounter every week. A few projects down the line, you'll start to see a notable improvement. Being able to look back at your early projects and cringe a little is a sign of growth.

You can watch episodes of *The Dungeon Master's Guild House* on [YouTube](#) and connect with presenter Matthew Whitby on [Twitter](#). Matthew's fifth edition content is available on [the DMs Guild](#).

DESIGN THOUGHT: WARLOCK PATRONS

One of the fun elements of creating a new warlock patron is the color and flavor you can bring to that entity. What are they like, where are they from, how did they acquire their power, and how do they view the world are all questions that help flesh them out and make them unique.

But there are also a few game mechanics to consider when creating a new patron. When a powerful entity is about to gift some of that power to another being, it's not something that will often be done lightly. There may be discussions, conditions, and even hurdles to jump before the transfer takes place. All of this makes for great roleplay and sets the agenda for the relationship going forward. Some of the options you might want to think about are:

Will there be a trial before the pact is sealed? Perhaps the patron wants to know that the character is up to the job before it shares its power with them. This may make for a great character introduction or session zero and add to the player's immersion.

What is the patron getting out of this deal? Some patrons want to share their power to help an individual and by extension help the world. Other patrons want to watch the world burn. Will they expect the warlock to complete tasks for them? Share the money, magical items or tomes they find while adventuring? Or even make regular sacrifices? Perhaps even more important, will they make this obligation clear before the pact is signed if a power-hungry character

isn't paying close enough attention?

What powers will be granted? Warlocks get abilities at 1st level so its important to make sure what's being offered by your patron build isn't overbalanced to the point where it might break the game. Bonus cantrips or the ability to cast extra 1st level spells help keep things grounded. But you might also want to allow one of those initial abilities to increase in power as the warlock progresses, so it doesn't become redundant at higher levels.

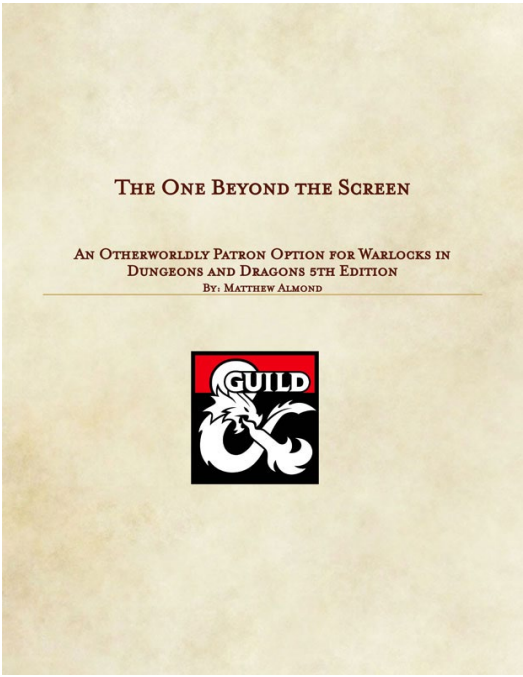
How will the patron communicate with the warlock? If you played out the beginning of the relationship between the two beings, this might be established early on. Or the warlock may put their head down on their bedroll after a long watch only to find the patron in their dreams and eager to chat for the first time. Perhaps the patron uses *sending* and only ever speaks in twenty-five-word sentences, limiting what can be communicated. Or they leave signs along a route the adventurer will travel, hoping they'll be spotted and understood. This is another great way to boost the roleplay between these individuals so think carefully about how they talk.

OFF-THE-WALL WARLOCK PATRONS

Above we've listed some of our favorite patrons from the DMs Guild community, many of whom are beings you would not want to mess with. But our search also uncovered a rich vein of powerful beings who might put the fun into dysfunctional in less serious campaigns, and we've collected the best of those below to bring a smile to your game.

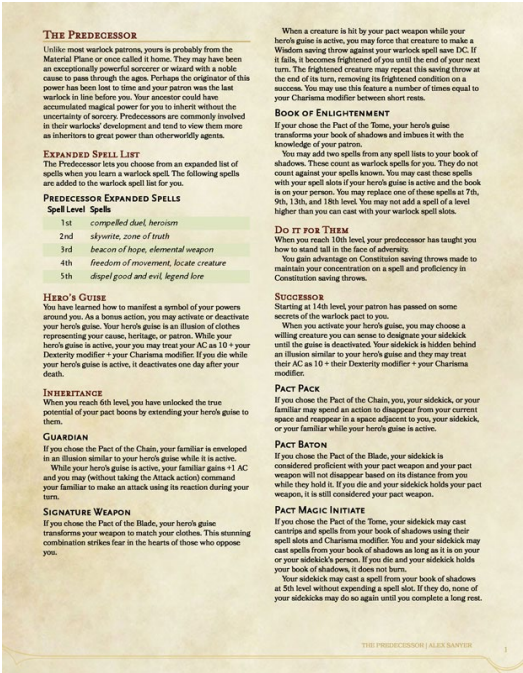
Warlock Patron: The One Beyond the Screen, by Matt Almond
Price: PWYW Suggested \$1 (PDF)

What if an all-powerful patron was naught but a lowly human sitting behind a screen, controlling the very rules of the world their characters inhabit? This warlock patron starts out by giving a



character extra skills and proficiencies, before sharing campaign notes with a player at higher levels if the character is willing to sacrifice something valuable enough. If there’s anything more meta than *The One Beyond the Screen*, we want to see it!

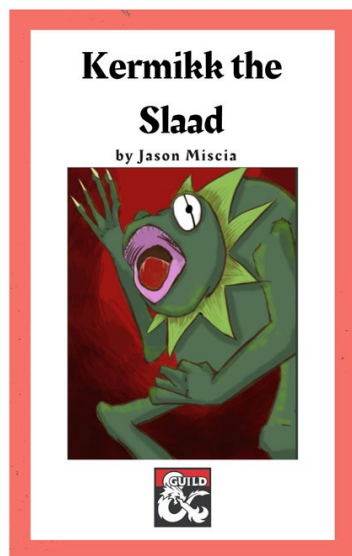
[DOWNLOAD PDF](#)



The Predecessor: Warlock Patron, by Alex Sanyer
Price: PWYW Suggested \$0.50 (PDF)

If you been itching to live your best Sailor Moon life in Dungeons & Dragons, this warlock patron that allows you to play as a magical girl is for you. As a bonus action, you may activate or deactivate your hero’s guise (an illusion of clothes representing your cause, heritage, or patron) that acts as armor. This disguise powers up as you level up, offering further weapon and defensive capabilities depending on which warlock pact (Chain, Blade, or Tome) you opted for.

DOWNLOAD PDF



Otherworldly Patron: Kermikk the Slaad, by Jason Miscia
Price: \$1 (PDF)

“It’s time to be a warlock! It’s time to show your might! It’s time to meet your patron at the *Slaadi Show* tonight!” From spotting talent with *see invisible* to tormenting your foes by summoning extraplanar entities Splatler and Talldorf, sometimes it’s easy to be in a pact with the green.

DOWNLOAD PDF

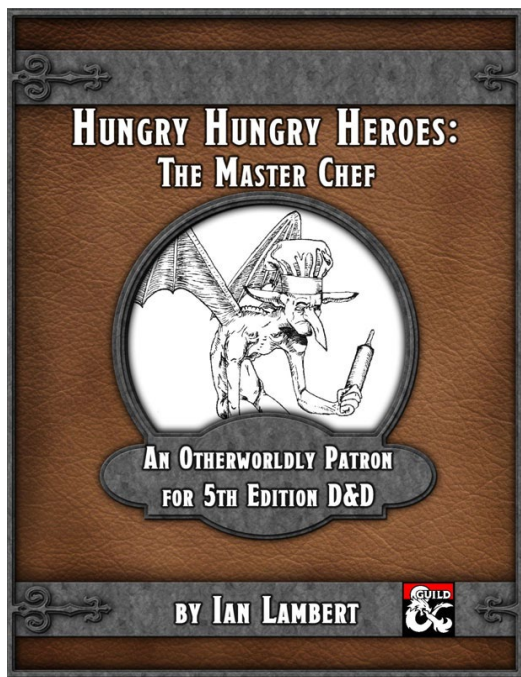


Joy Giver: Holiday Patron for Warlocks, by Óskar Örn Eggertsson
PWYW Suggested \$1.25 (PDF)

Ho! Ho! Ho! This holiday patron wants you to help them check the list, giving you the ability to cast *detect evil and good* without expending a spell slot. You’ll also help build the fabulous toys they’re so well known for, with proficiency in tools and the ability to bring those creations to life (creature stats for awakened toys and a toy swarm are included).

And that’s before you Glitterstep your way to safety!

DOWNLOAD PDF



The Master Chef Otherworldly Patron, by Ian Lambert
Price: \$1.99 (PDF)

Unlike most eldritch beings looking to make a pact with warlocks, this patron has one goal and one goal only: to cook delicious food. There's an impressive attention to detail in Ian's creation (plus great art by Emily Jane Foster), and the PDF contains the Master Chef subclass as well as four new culinary elementals: the oil, flour, salt, and pepper mephits.

[DOWNLOAD PDF](#)

DM'S GUILD DESIGN DASH



This frantic D&D design challenge takes place on the first Friday of every month. Lysa Penrose, Brand Manager at the DMs Guild, puts Benjamin Huffman, Omega Jones, and Adriel Wilson through their paces in the latest edition. Watch as they race against the clock to

design encounters based around the theme “BEES!!!”

[WATCH RECENT EPISODES](#)



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Shawn Wood

Our introduction to members of the D&D Team and their roles continues with the Concept Artist.

The D&D Team relishes the opportunity to work on the world's greatest roleplaying game. And we're also aware there are a fair number of folks interested in learning more about entering the gaming industry professionally.

With that in mind, each issue we'll chat with D&D staff from a diverse set of roles to find out how



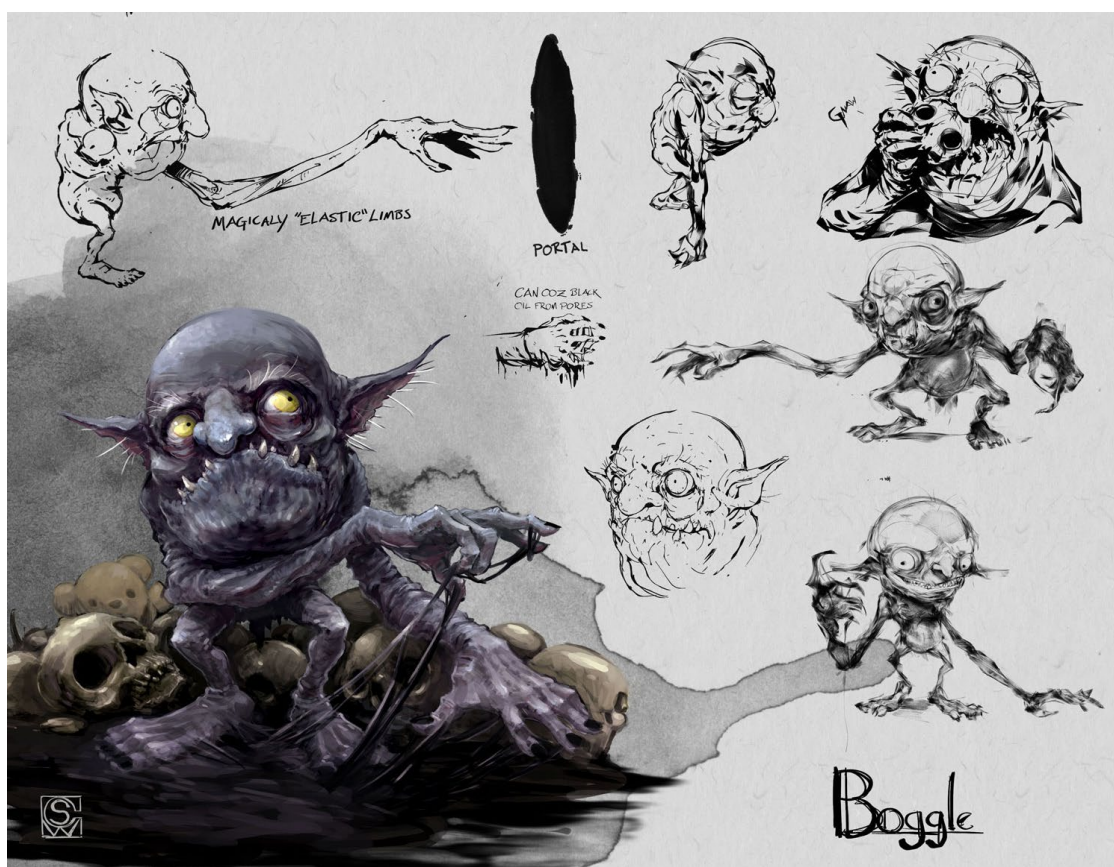
they came to be valued members of our party, while learning what advice they have for someone who might be looking to follow a similar path. Concept Artist Shawn Wood follows **Chris Tulach**, **Brandy Camel**, **Dan Tovar** and **Brian Perry** into our *zone of truth*.

Where in Faerûn or the wider multiverse do you hail from?

I grew up in the Midwest of the United States. I was born in Oklahoma and raised in southwest Missouri, and have also lived in Kansas for a while. But I moved out to Seattle when I left high school and I've been here ever since. A lot of the video game companies are based here and I worked in that industry for around fifteen years before I came to Wizards of the Coast.

What is your character class?

I've been at Wizards for around five and a half years and my official title is Concept Artist for Dungeons & Dragons. We hire a lot of external artists to help us but I'm the only full-time Concept Artist for D&D. My main responsibility is to work with the writers and the game designers, to help them visualize their ideas—whether it's monsters, castles, traps or whatever else.



(Select to view)

On some projects I work with outside artists to help with that early design work. They might work with us on a single design, or they might contribute as much as we can get from them for a few weeks. On other projects I might do all the concept work myself.

What made you want to join this party?

At the time, I'd just published a game for the Sony PlayStation 4. Working in video games can be a high-stress, bang or bust situation. You can work on projects that never see the light of day and as a concept artist that might mean there's a year's worth of work you never get to show. I was looking for a change and when the opportunity at Wizards popped up it was actually one of my brothers who told me about it: 'Check this out, Dungeons & Dragons is hiring.' I'd played D&D in high school and in college and I thought that could be very cool. When the job came up, I'd been working on a personal project featuring a lot of monster designs. That, in combination with all the previous game concepts I had done, must have caught Richard Whitters' eye. He deemed me worthy.

How can people interested in this kind of role level up?

Draw a lot. When I talk to people, especially younger folks that want

to become artists, they ask me how do you do it? And the answer is that you've got to draw a lot. I was not born a great artist, and I'm still improving. I draw probably eight to ten hours a day sometimes and the reason I get better is that I fail all the time. You've got to get the bad stuff out of the way to get to the good stuff. You have to be willing to fail and keep going because that's how you master the skill.



(select to view)

If there are budding artists out there looking to get into concept art, there are some additional skills that are very important. You need to understand design, understand people, and be able to get a handle on exactly what it is that you want to draw. There's an anthropological aspect to the job. You're not simply drawing the thing that you see in your head, you're drawing something that has to exist in a world. Why is it wearing what it's wearing? Why is it doing what it's doing? You've got to do the research.

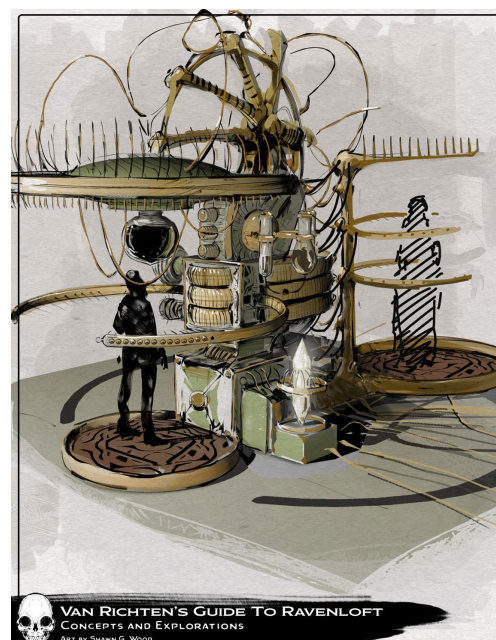
What character background led to you getting the job?

I was originally studying animation as an art student. The idea that I could work in video games had never even occurred to me. At the time I thought they were all made in Japan and the fact there were American video game companies blew my mind.

Once I realized that was an option,

and because I loves video games so much, I knew that's what I'd really like to do. My first job was working for a tiny studio on a game called *Magi-nation*, which was an RPG for the Gameboy Color. I was creating marketing illustrations and website material rather than working on the RPG side of the game.

Later, I worked on sprite animation for Gameboy Advance games for a few years. I can remember going from Gameboy Color palettes to Gameboy Advanced palettes, which was a big deal because suddenly you could use eight colors for a sprite! I created animation for cell phone games and got to work on some PC casual games, as well as PS Vita and PlayStation games, shifting from animation to game design and illustration. There was a lot of fantasy in there, although most of it was super cartoony. But that led me deeper into monster and character design.



(Select to view)

What's a typical session like?

When I'm working on a larger concept push, I've got a huge list of monsters, characters, places, and other items that need to be designed. Most days I'm free to pick from that list and start going to town. Whether I'm designing something new or finishing an illustration is the big choice I get to make each morning, depending on my mood. Designing something new takes a lot of mental energy and caffeine, while painting illustrations requires less intensity.

Throughout the week, I have meetings with writers, designers, and producers to show them the work and get feedback. It's a back and forth to make sure that we're all on the same page. Once I've completed any redesigns, I gather up all the sketches and drawings to hand off to the production team, who then commission illustrations for the book based off those designs. Occasionally, if the art directors like a piece of work enough and I have the time, I get to turn some of those concepts into the final illustrations. So you will see some of my

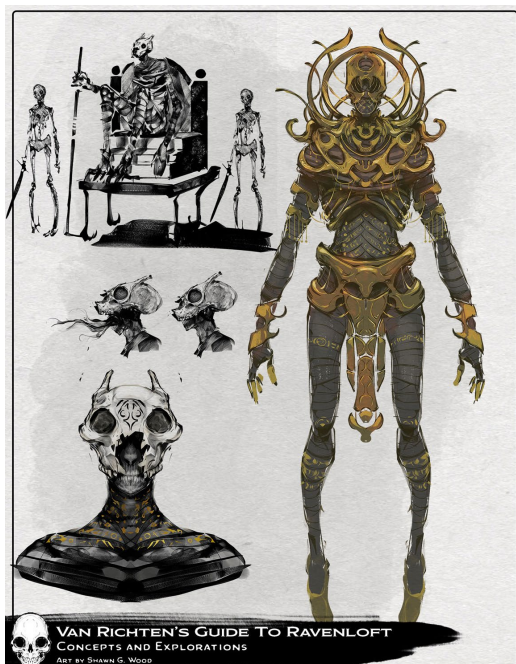
work in the D&D books.

Is multiclassing required?

Obviously, being able to draw is extremely important. But the other important skill is the ability to understand what people want. I spend half my time practicing telepathy, which is a little odd. Being able to ask the right questions is an important skill for a concept artist.

You're trying to take what someone else wants and then turn that information into something visually interesting. You have to work with people to get context and understand what's really important. But what might be the standout thing for someone's character — 'They have dazzling green eyes, that's their hallmark' — may not work in illustration. A character's eyes are tiny so you have to find something else about them that's interesting.

Every artist has their own take on things and that's also true of concept artists. If you look at Brahm's work it's got this dark, gothy vibe to it. But when you look at Tony DiTerlizzi's art, it's got a charming, whimsical look to it. Both of those artists were working on Dungeons & Dragons at the same time. Part of the fun is that I now get to put my slant on D&D. You're not simply drawing what's been described, you're also adding a lot to the story. I'm not sure how I would define my style but it's often more on the whimsical side. Whimsical, but weird.



(Select to view)

What do you like best about this party role?

I enjoy getting to sit down with people before there's even a single word on paper. Or if there are words, there aren't very many of them yet. You join a writer's room and become part of that conversation, bringing your perspective as both a visual designer and someone that has game design chops. And together you work out what's going to be cool about whatever aspect you're designing. That's a lot of fun.

What's your coolest artifact?

That's a very hard decision! It could be one of the many books that I use. For instance, the *Tactics Ogre* concept art book is amazing if you've never seen it. The artists for that video game are Tsubasa Masao and Akihiko Yoshida, who went on to do *Final Fantasy Tactics* and *Final Fantasy XIV*, and it's packed with really cool art.

But the coolest thing on my desk might actually be a real skull of a roe deer from Belarus, which I bought off Etsy. You'll find that if you go to the office of any illustrator or concept artist, it's filled with dead things. Animal skulls can provide great inspiration, especially when you're working on D&D because there are a lot of undead things that have odd shapes for their skulls. I tell people the roe deer skull is from a demon familiar. That started my collection and then people started giving skulls to me. I've got a beaver skull that's like a little vampire and there's a cow skull around here somewhere. My human skull isn't real but it's a nice recreation.



Have there been any surprise rounds?

The biggest surprise is the amount of interesting people I've met. When I originally took this job, I wasn't thinking much beyond creating monsters. But the amount and type of people walking

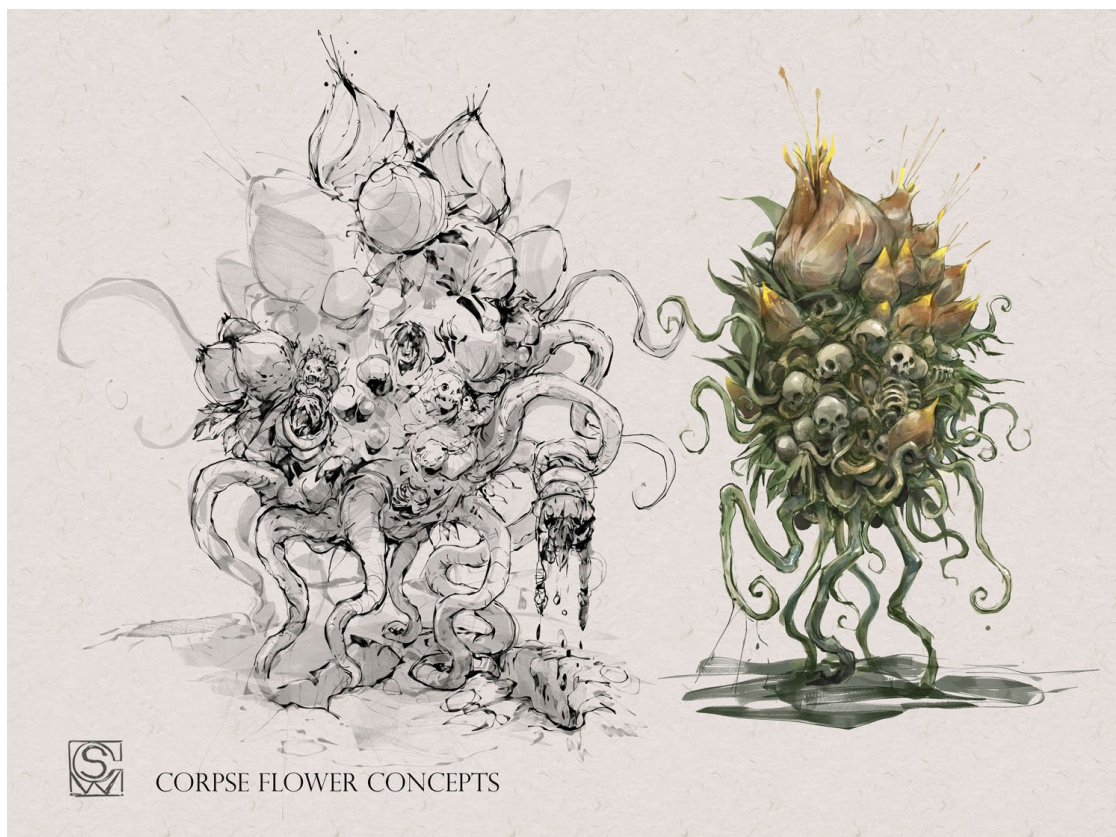
through the door that you get to collaborate with is very cool. I'm not only talking celebrities here—though it is amazing to see how many celebrities show up—but interesting and extremely smart people. When you want to work on a project that has a particular subject matter, you have the ability to call in experts in that field and sit and talk to them. I had an hour-long conversation with the biggest nautical brain in the world, because we were working on boats and I wanted to learn more about them, which blew my mind.

There's also something nice about the stickiness of the work that I do on Dungeons & Dragons. When I was working in video games, if the title you publish is successful it'll stick around for maybe a year before starting to fade away. Yet some of the first things I created for Dungeons & Dragons were the firbolgs and the tabaxi, and it's really cool to still see people enjoying those designs now.

Which of your footprints would be visible even under the influence of *pass without trace*?

Volo's Guide to Monsters was the first book that I worked on and has quite a bit of my work in it. But I usually have one or two full illustrations in each of the D&D books. Design-wise, when you look at character and creature designs, I've probably touched a little bit of all of those. In *Mordenkainen's Tome of Foes*, for example, I designed or redesigned at least sixty per cent of those monsters.

Another fun part of the job is that there's this incredible depth of existing D&D content that I get to look at, and then bring back to life. It's like an artistic archaeological dig through the history of D&D to find the designs that sing. I then either rework those designs or start them again from scratch.



(Select to view)

Which figure gives you inspiration?

Both of my brothers are artists—one is an animator, while the other is an illustrator and art professor in Philadelphia. They're both extremely talented and I enjoy a lot of their work.

Elsewhere, it's a conglomeration of a lot of different people. When anime and video game material first started making its way to America from Japan, it had a big effect on me. When I was younger, I was a huge *Final Fantasy* fan and I loved Yoshitaka Amano's work. I then followed all of the other artists that worked on *Final Fantasy* after him, especially in terms of concept art. I have all of their books behind me.

Tony DiTerlizzi's work also had a huge impact on me. I loved the *Magic: The Gathering* cards he created in the '90s and his work for D&D in the *Monster Manual* and *Planescape*. I only learned recently that some of the *Planescape* designs were also inspired by Yoshitaka Amano, so Tony and I are on the same page!

I didn't really start getting into Miyazaki and Studio Ghibli until I was an adult, but that's also affected the way I think about character design. It taught me that thoughtfulness and being charming goes so

much farther than being cool and I've tried to encapsulate that in my work. If you can get that empathy or pathos across, people connect with a character and feel as if it's someone that they like or really dislike, rather than simply dismissing it as being a cool drawing.

All that said, the biggest influence on my art over the last decade and more has been my wife, Grace. She is my *real* target audience.



(Select to view)

Who rolls best for Performance?

I used to follow *Critical Role* religiously and one of these days I'll catch up again because I love watching that cast play. I listen to a lot of NPR generally, but specifically *Radiolab*, as I like any kind of science, economic or psychology podcast. I try to stay informed.

What are your downtime activities?

I'm not as big a gamer as I used to be. There'll usually be one video game a year I'll get into and finish. I have some otaku chops, I guess you could say, as I grew up at the time anime started coming over to the US. It's just such a wonderfully strange and oftentimes very pretty storytelling medium. I still watch a lot of anime and I follow certain directors and studios.

And I listen to a lot of sci-fi audiobooks while I work: Peter F. Hamilton, Alastair Reynolds, and Neal Stephenson. For whatever reason, the part of my brain that draws can still process fiction while I work. I've started to run out of things to listen to—I'm probably one of the few people that have heard the entire *Wheel of Time* series more than once! I also enjoy writing and I'm trying to improve so that I have something to do in the later years.

Otherwise, I spend a lot of time landscaping and gardening in my yard. I find that pretty relaxing and it actually gets me out and away from the desk. And as an artist you're almost always drawing whether you're working or not. It's like being an athlete. If you quit

doing it, you get worse at it.

What's your favorite thing about D&D?

The TTRPG is my favorite aspect of all the D&D brands and fifth edition is by far my favorite edition. I'm the Dungeon Master most of the time so I *wish* I had a favorite character class—it'd probably be wizard. But *Tasha's hideous laughter* is easily my favorite spell.

You can hear more from Shawn Wood and connect with him on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

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Next Issue

Look out for a major update to this issue following D&D Live 2021!



There's an exciting change to the usual *Dragon+* schedule that means you won't have to wait for a whole new issue to drop to get your next hit of Dungeons & Dragons!

D&D Live 2021 will uncover more secrets about the major launches announced this issue (check out our *In the Works* section where we tease those) and we'll have exclusive interviews to share with their creators following that 16-17th July event. Principal Story Designer Chris Perkins unveils the carnival of delights that beckons in *The Wild Beyond the Witchlight*, while Senior Designer Amanda Hamon takes us back to school with *Strixhaven: A Curriculum of Chaos*.

HOST: KATE WELCH **JACK BLACK** **REGGIE WATTS**

THE LOST ODYSSEY: LAST LIGHT TABLE

LAUREN LAPKUS **KEVIN SMITH** **JASON MEWES** **SPECIAL GUEST**

BENEFITTING EXTRA LIFE **STREAMING ON PEACOCK & G4/D&D TWITCH/YOUTUBE CHANNELS**

D&D LIVE **JULY 16 - 17** **PRESENTED BY G4**

We'll also have a rundown of every livestream from *D&D Live* so

you can catch up on any action you might have missed—including Kate Welch’s celebrity game featuring Hollywood actor and musician Jack Black, *Jay and Silent Bob*’s Kevin Smith and Jason Mewes, Lauren Lapkus (*Orange is the New Black*), comedian and musician Reggie Watts, and a “very special guest” still to be announced! Aabria Iyengar also leads WWE Superstars Xavier Woods, Ember Moon, Mace the Wrestler and Tyler Breeze into The Chaos Carnival, as they experience an oddly unfamiliar familiar journey!

Our mid-issue update also includes another delve into the imposing *Dragon* archive, more free, downloadable locations to test your players courtesy of our *Maps of the Month* column, and much, *much* more!

(Contents subject to change)



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A big thank you to Peter Adkison and Steve Conard for sharing their stories about *Magic: The Gathering*'s early days!

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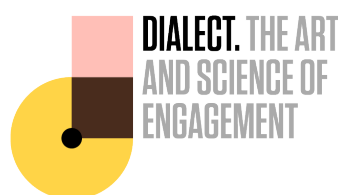
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